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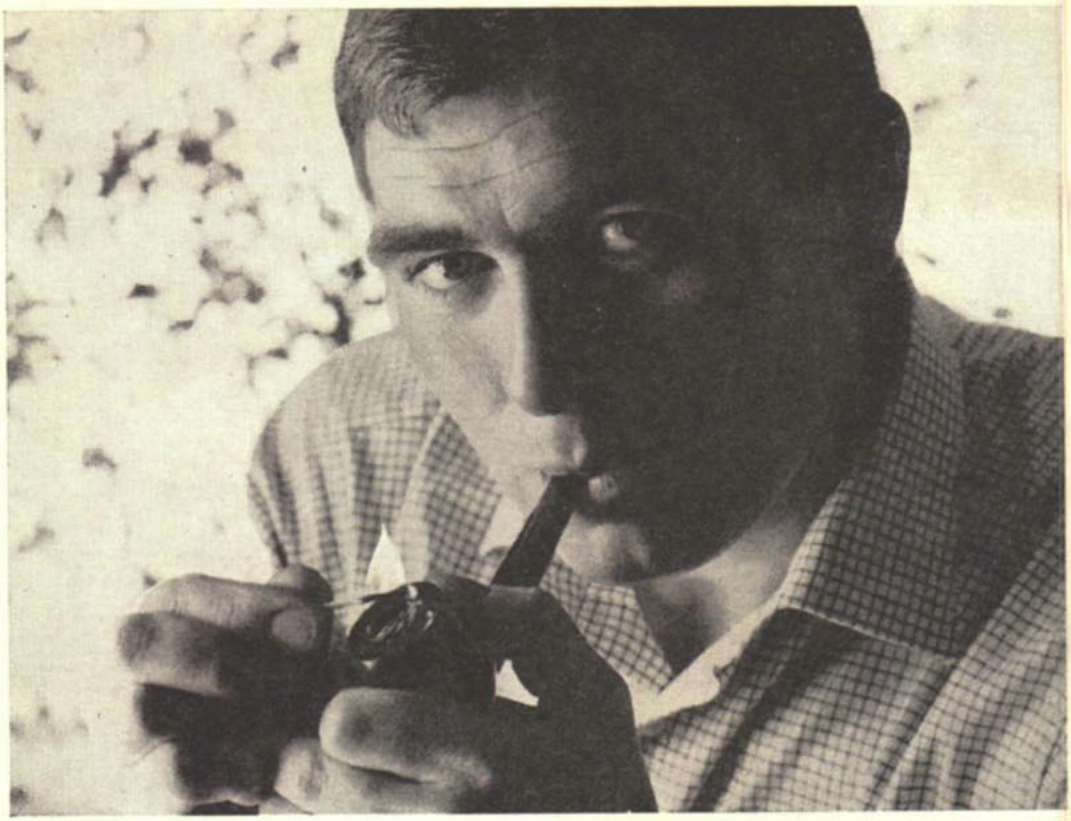

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Edited by STEPHEN SPENDER *and* MELVIN J. LASKY

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Lionel Trilling

The Two Environments

Reflections on the Study of English

ALMOST A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, nine notable teaching scholars undertook to examine the theory and practice of English upper-class education. They were all distinguished by their learning in the classical languages and by their devotion to the ancient literatures, but most of them brought into exigent question the predominant place that the study of Greek and Latin held in the public school curriculum, to the exclusion of other subjects that seemed appropriate to the circumstances of the modern world. Their speculations and recommendations were published as *Essays on a Liberal Education* under the editorship of F. W. Farrar and the book is kept in memory, at least by educationists, as a landmark in the development of modern schooling. Adamson, the historian of English education, speaks of it as "one of the earliest works to assert the possibility of a modern humanism, the possibility of extracting from modern literature much which was commonly thought to be derivable from a study of Greek and Latin alone."

In the making of this assertion, one of the essays, that by Henry Sidgwick, was especially cogent in its criticism of the hegemony of the two classical languages and in its proposal that, for most pupils, the study of Greek be replaced by the study of English. Sidgwick advanced his argument on moral and political grounds, his chief point being that both in the personal life and in the social life more enlightenment and sensibility were needed than the existing curriculum supplied. He said:

> If so many of our expensively educated youth regard athletic sports as the one conceivable mode of enjoying leisure: if so many professional persons confine their extra-professional reading to the newspapers and novels: if the middle-class Englishman (as he is continually told) is narrow, unrefined, conventional, ignorant of what is really good and really evil in human life; if (as an uncompromising writer says) "he is the tool of bigotry, the echo of stereotyped opinions, the victim of class prejudices, the great stumbling-block in the way of a general diffusion of a high cultivation in this country"—it is not because these persons have had a literary education which "invincible brutality" has rendered inefficacious: it is because the education has not been (to them) literary: in their study of Greek and Latin their minds have been simply put through various unmeaning linguistic exercises.

And Sidgwick went on:

> But the time seems to have come for us to discern and repair this natural mistake. Let us demand . . . that all boys, whatever their special bent and destination, be really taught literature: so that, as far as possible, they may learn to enjoy intelligently poetry and eloquence; that their interest in history may be awakened, stimulated and guided; that their views and sympathies may be enlarged and expanded by apprehending noble, subtle, and profound thoughts, refined and lofty feelings: that some comprehension of the various development of human nature may ever after abide with them, the source and essence of a truly humanising culture. Thus in the prosecution of their special study or function, while their energy will be even stimulated, their views and aims will be more intelligent, more central; and therefore their work, if less absorbing, not less effective.

The year was 1867, the year of the Second Reform Bill, which established the principle of political democracy in England and made plain how much of the old way of doing things would have to be given up. This was the year of the publication of *Culture and Anarchy*, in which, to a middle class "besotted with business,"

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Matthew Arnold proposed as a means of salvation, as a means, indeed, of survival, the knowledge of the best that has been thought and said in the world. The particular terms of Arnold's conception of what literature might do for the health of the state are not exactly the same as Sidgwick's, but the two are much in accord and the area of their coincidence may be said to constitute the rationale of our own modern theory of general education as a whole and to provide what has seemed the strongest of all justifications that can be offered for making literature a school or university subject.

CERTAIN PARTS of the enterprise of education need little or no justification. Science, of course, is nowadays justified out of hand, if only by its connection with technology. Scarcely more is required to be said on behalf of the social and political sciences; their practical value is acknowledged, and their professional possibilities are obvious: from history, economics, sociology, come historians, economists, and sociologists, or civil servants for whom the social disciplines will be of use. But the study of literature is not justified by practical and professional considerations. Those of us who teach the subject may be proud of our students who go on also to teach it, but we do not justify our profession by its powers of self-perpetuation. Nor would we dare try to establish our credit in society by pointing to the poets and novelists who are produced by our teaching. Our rationalisation must be wider: it must include the aims of education in its largest sense, or, as we might wish to say, its real sense. It has to do with what in America we call—or used to call until we got sick of the phrase—the whole man. Other disciplines also contribute to the making of the whole man—the study of music and the plastic arts, history, mathematics, science, and philosophy. But the study of literature has traditionally been felt to have a unique effectiveness in opening the mind and illuminating it, in purging the mind of prejudices and received ideas, in making the mind free and active. The classic defence of literary study holds that, from the mobilising and liberalising of the sentiments which the study of literature brings about, there results, or can be made to result, an improvement in the intelligence, and especially the intelligence as it touches the moral life.

What I am calling the classic defence of literary study, the justification that was offered by Sidgwick and somewhat less explicitly by Arnold, has been, it would seem, of great efficacy. The profession of "English" teaching has established itself in the schools and even more impressively in the universities, and has become an important new element in the intellectual life of England and America.[1] In America, at least, the study of English has come to be thought of as the most usual and the most natural training for active participation in the intellectual life of the nation. Indeed, when we speak of "the intellectual," we are likely to have chiefly in mind the literary intellectual, the product of an English department. Less committed to method and to fact than the philosopher and the social scientist, licensed in emotion and intuition by the tradition of the subject he has studied, he ranges freely and makes his appeal to man-in-general. It is he who can contrive the most stir, who is most to the fore in the agitation of moral and cultural questions. It is he who is most likely to act on the assumption that the intellectual life is dramatic.

THIS IS NOT THE PLACE to rehearse the development of the academic study of English beyond taking brief note of its two stages. When it became plain that there was an anomaly in wholly excluding from the university the study of the great literature of the mother-tongue, the discipline that was at last instituted occupied itself chiefly with the historical or "scientific" aspects of the subject. Against the domination of a scholarship that seemed far from humanistic the partisans of criticism began to wage war something more than four decades ago. They thought of themselves as isolated and outmatched and they regarded their subject, which was literature considered for its own sake and on its own terms and understood as having an influence on the feelings and actions of men in daily life, as undervalued and oppressed. The day of their heroism and pathos has passed and the brave small band with its guerrilla tactics

[1] I put "English" between quotation marks in order to be able to include both the English and the American situations in my purview. In England, if I understand the situation correctly, an English faculty or department confines its activity to English literature; in America an English department concerns itself not only with English but also American literature and even foreign literature in translation.

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and bold improvisations is now a proud profession. In America, even ten years ago, an English department had to search out recruits who had lively literary intelligences and at the same time a solid bottom of learning; now a department chooses with difficulty among the gifted, well-trained young men who present themselves. Very likely a similar situation obtains in England.

IF WE LOOK for the *mystique* from which the English-teaching profession drew its strength, we can scarcely fail to find it in the moral justification that was provided by Sidgwick and Arnold. The American whole-man theory assumes that the students' first concerns are practical. It may be that this assumption cannot nowadays be made with as much confidence and simplicity as once was possible, yet of course it may still be reasonably supposed that what Sidgwick calls "work" and Arnold calls "business" will occupy the students when they reach maturity and that at least a chief reason for their being in college is to prepare themselves for a life of work or business. We then say that we will not let them depart the university until they have submitted to certain humanising and liberalising disciplines among which literature is pre-eminent.

The English system of undergraduate education is very different from the American, but the justification of the study of literature is much the same in the two countries. In *The Muse Unchained*, an account of the development of the English School at Cambridge, Professor E. M. W. Tillyard, remarking that the three Firsts in the School in a certain year did not pursue the study further, comforts himself with the thought that after all the purpose of the discipline of English is not to "make dons but to construct people." If one undertakes the making of the whole man and the construction of people, one does indeed have in mind the personal and private lives of the men who are made whole or the people who are constructed, but one's intention is also of a public kind—it has ultimately to do with the state, with the quality of the persons who shall control the state, or at least with the quality of persons who shall criticise the state and make demands on it. This highly moralised intention, this public justification of the study of literature, marked the insurgent movement of English study. If it was seldom quite so explicit as Henry Sidgwick made it, it was still present and active. Its having been made eloquently explicit by Sidgwick in part explains the special admiration in which he is held by Dr. Leavis and Mrs. Leavis. *Scrutiny* was not the whole of the insurgent movement of English teaching and with *Scrutiny* we all have had our quarrels, but we respect it and are grateful to it, and it was undeniably central to the insurgent movement. And the moral and public intention of *Scrutiny* is plain: without being overtly political, it undertook to construct people whose quality of intelligence, derived from literary study or refined by it, would ultimately affect the condition of society in certain good ways.

BUT NOW IT MUST BE a question whether this intention, this classic justification of the study of literature, is still available to the English teaching profession. It was evolved in circumstances in which it was possible to attribute to literature a function which it may no longer have. Sidgwick and Arnold envisaged a class situation marked by massiveness and stolidity, a moral and social situation made up of heavy minds dully gratified by the possession of heavy things. Not for nothing did Arnold in his lectures on Homer extol the qualities of clearness and rapidity—he wanted them for the English of the middle classes who, Arnold conceived, existed in a state of sodden immobility. Sidgwick asks in effect for an increase in sensibility through literature, for a greater degree of emotional vivacity. Both men are dealing with a society, or a decisive section of society, that was entrenched in material possession, in pride and self-satisfaction, in dogmatic religious belief or, worse, habitual half-belief. Neither man foresaw the mobility of modern society, the contemporary suffusion of the mind by ideas, or at least notions, attitudes, preferences, judgments, of which many, perhaps most, are of a benign, enlightened, moralised, liberal kind. They did not foresee the present circumstance of the large diffusion of artistic culture and its simulacra, of a society drenched with art of one degree of excellence or another and with newspaper gossip about the arts.

To the small band of pioneers who had to struggle for the establishment of the study of English in the universities, the old moral line was still appropriate. It suited their purpose to believe that the future of literature was what Arnold had said it was: immense. But the new firm establishment of the English teaching profession, of which I have spoken, is indicative

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of and continuous with a change in our general cultural situation, and with the new position in which literature now stands. The brilliant professional corps could not have arisen had it not been called into being by society, a society very different from that which Sidgwick and Arnold confronted, had its existence not been validated by a new attitude towards literature. If the old pathos and heroism of the teachers of English are now outmoded, it is because now it means nothing to say that the future of literature is immense. The fact is that the present of literature is immense. Who in the old pioneering days would have supposed that there would come a time when a serious critic could possibly begin his discourse on literary education as Mr. Graham Hough begins his, with a description of the high place that literature holds in contemporary life, a place that can be thought of—this is Mr. Hough's point—as actually too high?[2]

NO ILLUSIONS will attend our awareness of this new state of affairs. It is clear that the whole of the British and American population has not fallen suddenly under the beneficent sway of literature. The influence and authority of literature extend to no more than certain sub-groups of the middle class or to certain groups that have some new and complicated relation to Sidgwick's and Arnold's idea of the middle class. But these groups are considerable in size and they constitute an important—a decisive—circumstance of our cultural life. It is they who propose the questions to the English-teaching profession, for they are to be found in great numbers among the new undergraduate population, the increase of which is so large and sudden that we call it an explosion.

It is not the mere mass of students who present themselves to the English faculties that makes the questions, but rather what is said to be the students' particular interests within their speciality and the intellectual temper indicated by their interests. If the English faculties could suppose that the students were moved by a desire to understand the nature of literature and the history of the variations of its nature, and if they knew the students to be cheerfully devoted to the whole range of English literature from, say, Langland and Chaucer to, say, Gerard Manley Hopkins, it might be thought that the new great numbers of students were a phenomenon that was curious but benign.

What makes the troubled heart of the matter is the belief that the new undergraduates are characteristically drawn to modern literature and that, indeed, their appetite for the modern is not to be appeased by such figures as Yeats and Eliot, whose stature, complexity, and Victorian birth-dates in a measure reassure the faculties—the students, we hear, press towards the contemporary and increasingly demand its inclusion in the curriculum. The stubbornness of faculties is magnificent, but the force of student preference, if it continues long enough, is irresistible, and one cannot help believing that the day will come when one English faculty after another will say in effect what the Duke of Cambridge said upon his retirement from the army after a career in which he had opposed all efforts of reform: "Gentlemen, there have been great changes in my time, great changes. But I can say this. Every change has been made at the right time, and the right time is when you cannot help it."

I make my prophecy on the basis of what has happened in America. I should perhaps say that I have previously expressed a judgment on the American practice in the teaching of modern and even contemporary literature which is at least ambivalent, and I am far from urging now that it be emulated in England. And I do not in fact believe that it is likely to be emulated in the very near future. The American theory of undergraduate education being what it is, our selection of the books we teach can, with some show of consistency, be rather permissive. At least in some quarters the feeling exists that almost any involvement with literature is better than none, and some even say that, things being as they are with some students' preparation, J. D. Salinger or Arthur Miller do more than Milton can to convey to the students what Sidgwick calls "noble, subtle, and profound thoughts, refined and lofty feelings," and to give them some comprehension of "the varied development of human nature."

In England, where undergraduate specialisation is still the order of the day, something more than this is expected. The American system, conceiving of literature as a necessary element, but only an element, in a general university education, supposes that enough has been done if the sensibility of the undergraduate has been engaged, although of course a great deal

[2] *The Dream and The Task: Literature and Morals in the Culture of Today* (London, 1963).

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more than this is often accomplished. In England the study of English may be, for those students who choose it, the whole of their university training, and its intellectual benefit is presumed to come through a *mastery* of the subject. This is a circumstance that will make the English acceptance of the modern relatively slow. And in general, as compared with America, England is not exactly a culturally mobile nation. The process which Mr. Harold Rosenberg has described, whereby American public intellectual agencies (such as museums, university art departments, and professional publications) can bring about the quick acceptance of new kinds of painting and can be understood as having the power not only to "make into art what is now not art" but also to unmake what is now art, so that "it is conceivable that Michelangelo, Vermeer, Goya, Cezanne, will some day cease to be art" at the behest of "an extreme ideology"—this process does not operate so freely in England. The response of England to extreme ideologies is likely to be somewhat reluctant, and the momentousness of cultural choices is not so apparent as it is in America. Among the American intellectual classes the larger part of available feeling flows to the issues of culture, for which the issues of politics are often but a mask. The English still allocate most of their fund of partisan emotion to politics, perhaps led to do so by their still-maintained feelings about social class.

But the English distribution of emotion is likely to change—it is probable that more and more response will be made to the stimuli offered by the contemporary culture, and the English faculties of the English universities will have to take account of the increased sensitivity. This tendency has, indeed, gone far enough to have recently called forth an adverse editorial comment from the *Times Literary Supplement*. It was said of the students who increasingly crowd the English departments of the universities that they choose English out of a lack of intellectual commitment or stamina: they believe it to be an easy subject. The same deficiency in a more extreme form was said to explain the students' preference for modern writers as being more accessible to their undeveloped imaginations than the older writers. The editorial comment was entitled "Without It" and thus made reference to the faded but still viable phrase "with it," meaning to be aware of and on easy terms with what is authoritative in the cultural life, especially in the arts as they suggest styles of personality: it means the ability to receive accurately the messages of the *Zeitgeist*.

The editorial comment intended chiefly to suggest that the students' preferences were modish and faddish. Perhaps so; but we shall be very inadequate historians of culture if we do not explicate this judgment. The English middle classes of the 16th and 17th centuries fell prey to a fad of Bible-reading and theological radicalism. We can scarcely understand how these Puritan predilections could once have impassioned many minds, but before they passed beyond our comprehension, they changed the social and cultural fabric of England and helped contrive the social and cultural fabric of America.

The analogy is not gratuitous. It has been said by many, myself among them, that literature, modern literature in particular, now stands virtually in the place of religion and may even be thought of as itself a religion. Mr. Hough puts it that literature is now required to "provide the foundations of feeling, conduct, and belief for those who have no other source of supply." And of this literary religion or quasi-religion Mr. Hough says that it is "without a system, without an ethic, without a creed." With this I cannot agree. If literature (or art in general) has indeed become a religion, at least in a manner of speaking, it is true that those who profess it make scarcely any demand upon it for those rational and consequential elements that have been thought essential in highly developed religions. But although it may be very difficult to trace out a "system" in the literary religion, and rather difficult to formulate its "creed," yet its ethic is by no means obscure.

Indeed, when we try to understand the impulse that leads so many students to make their way into the English departments of the universities, we may well conclude that it is in large part a moral impulse. I speak only from my experience of American students, but I am confident that it is no less true of students in England that an involvement with modern literature goes with an insistent—perhaps it is to be called a nagging—concern with morality. Confronted by this high moralisation of his students, the teacher of English might well feel that he is deprived of one function of his profession. It is really no longer open to him to suppose that his

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pupils' views and sympathies need to be enlarged and expanded (as Sidgwick put it) by instruction in literature. He is not, to be sure, teaching a new race of young moral geniuses, but neither is he rescuing his pupils from a general culture which has made them thrall to an "invincible brutality." Their choice of a subject, their especial preference for the modern part of it, make it impossible to suppose this. One characteristic of our general culture is the readiness of at least certain groups to try to know "what is really good and really evil in human life." It is a point of cultural pride to demonstrate such knowledge.

BUT IF WE SPEAK OF the students' concern with what is really good and really evil in human life, a concern stimulated by modern literature and expressed in part through the study of it, we must not conclude that we are referring to a concern with morality in the traditional sense of the word, certainly not in the sense in which it was likely to be used in the 19th century. Since I have spoken of Henry Sidgwick, I shall venture to refer to an episode of his intellectual life to suggest what I understand to be the nature of the characteristic modern concern with morality by distinguishing it from that of a time beyond our own.

Sidgwick, whose most memorable book is his work on ethics, tells us in an autobiographical memoir that in his ethical theory he began as an adherent of John Stuart Mill. For a considerable time he saw no incoherence between the two elements of Mill's system, the impulse of a man to seek his own happiness and the less manifest impulse he has to seek the happiness of all. Sidgwick was attracted to both elements, to the former because of its "frank naturalism," to the latter because of its inspiring dictate of readiness for "absolute self-sacrifice." Eventually he saw that the two impulses, so far from being in harmony, made a dilemma. He thereupon set himself to "examine methodically the relation of Interest and Duty." How he resolved the dilemma to his own satisfaction need not concern us: I recall the episode only to suggest how alien to us is what was so natural to Sidgwick, the perception of an ethical dilemma and the methodical examination of it.

This old way of conceiving of the moral life still has a degree of meaning for us. We *understand* it. We can, for example, still take pleasure in the novelist who, perhaps more fully than any other, represents the old ethical mode, and we consider that Henry James is indeed being praised when he is called "the historian of fine consciences." But what novelist of our day might we celebrate with that phrase? Mr. Raymond Williams has said that in our time a "civilised and especially a literate man" is overtaken by hysterical anxiety when he is spoken to in moral terms. This is certainly not to say that the civilised literate man of our time has no moral consciousness. But his—our—moral consciousness is very different from that exemplified by Sidgwick. So far from taking explicit account of ethical dilemmas, it expresses itself by saying that these do not—because they should not, because they need not—exist.

THE NEGATION does not leave the modern morality without positive intention. Far from it; its intention is very positive indeed. As it is to be discerned in the relation of people to modern literature and in that literature itself, it may be defined in the phrase that Yeats once used to explain the intention of magic.

"The ultimate object of magic in all ages," Yeats said, "was, and is, to obtain control of the sources of life." By "the sources of life" Yeats meant, we may suppose, not only what supports existence but what yields to man the fullness, freedom, and potency of life he desires. The intention of obtaining control of the sources of life has always been part of the purpose of both literature and religion. And it has not been alien from the purpose of morality, even when morality has proposed itself in its least "positive" form. But the intention has never so fully possessed the literary enterprise as it does today. And most certainly it has never been in such absolute command of morality as it now is. If Sidgwick's particular dilemma, the contradiction between Interest and Duty, no longer engages us, I think we can say that this is because the modern morality, in its powerful imagination of the sources of life and the need to obtain control over them, denies the contradiction between Interest and Duty. Typically in our culture, when a person of goodwill thinks of the control of the sources of life, he conceives of it as assuring the happiness of both the individual and the generality of mankind. He assumes that there is a continuity between what he desires for himself and what he desires for others—what he wants for himself in the way of fullness, freedom, and potency is the paradigm of what he wants for others; what he

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wants for others he thinks of as the guarantee of the fullness, freedom, and potency he wants for himself.

THUS DESCRIBED, the moral temper of our time might well seem to deserve great praise and to give us ground for self-congratulation. Concerned as it is with the Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number, it yet does not feel the need to undergo examination by the Utilitarian rationality that Sidgwick exemplifies. We might almost feel free to believe that we have entered at least into the borders of that stage in the development of mankind which Schiller predicted and longed for, in which the moral life is no longer problematical and painful, in which, indeed, it does not really exist—perhaps at last we are on the way to being released from the old bondage to Necessity and have actually got one foot into the realm of Freedom, in which the faculty of conscientious reason is not needed to make its sad grey discriminations. A true relation to the sources of life does not refer to rational criteria; it is expressed not in doctrine, not in systems, ethics, and creeds, but in manner and style. We know whether or not a person is in touch with the sources of life not by what he says, by its doctrinal correctness, but by the way he says it, by the tone of his voice, the look in his eyes, by his manner and style.

So, too, with a society: we know if it is really in touch with the sources of life not by its mere practical arrangements but by the style of life that it fosters, by what we call its *culture*, using that word chiefly in its anthropological sense and taking it to denote a complex unity which may be judged as a whole, rather as if it were a work of art.

THE CRITERION of style, the examination of life by the aesthetic mode, yields judgments of a subtle and profound kind, of great compelling force. Such judgments are the stuff of the great classic literature of the modern period. Yeats and Eliot, Lawrence and Joyce, each in his own way, have instructed us how to make these judgments for ourselves, teaching us that there can be nothing within that passeth show, that whatever is within of grace or lack of grace will manifest itself in the timbre of the voice, the rhythm of the speech, in how the foot meets the ground, in the feel of the chosen cloth, in the fashion of the house inhabited. By such things we learn to know our neighbours; they yield a knowledge that transcends the knowledge of mere actions. They make the ground for a kind of judgment more searching and exigent than that of the old morality of the deed, a knowledge that is rather cruel, really, but fascinating; it promises not only a new kind of truth but a new kind of power, very exciting.

It is notoriously difficult to dispute about style in a coherent and rational way. But it is not difficult to dispute about style in *some* way. And when style is conceived of as an index of morality, as showing what the relation of someone or something is to the sources of life, the passions of the dispute will be very intense. The intensity naturally increases when style is thought of not only as the index of a relation to the sources of life but as an effectual means of obtaining control of them. The extraordinary anger that Dr. Leavis directed against C. P. Snow a few years ago is to be accounted for by the latter's having approached the sources of life in a style that Dr. Leavis believed to be a wrong one. In Dr. Leavis' view, it was not so much that his antagonist held mistaken opinions or subscribed to wrong doctrines, the imputed error being demonstrable by reason, it was rather that his magic was of the wrong kind, his medicines of bad omen: Lord Snow's incantations were in a style that Dr. Leavis held to be inadmissible.

THIS FAMOUS INSTANCE of stylistic polemic is less in accord with the usual critical practice of England than of America, where it is the mark of the culturally sensitive critic to concentrate upon manner and tone and to express his judgment upon these in a mode that reaches, as it is intended to reach, the point of personal inculpation. But the American practice is available to the English critic, and it is probable that the idiom of "cultural," as opposed to intellectual, debate will increasingly seem appropriate to the English. The intense concern with questions of style, the assumption that style is an effectual means of commanding the highest degree of fullness, freedom, and potency of life, is consonant with certain gross aspects of modern society at large.

It must now be one of the commonplaces of sociology that, less in England than in America, but increasingly in England (as well as in certain European countries), the economy itself is deeply implicated with style, with the condi-

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tions of the spirit or psyche. Our virtually avowed commodities are joy, freedom, self-definition, self-esteem, and one industry after another is benefited by our ever-growing need to choose a fashion of dress, or *décor*, or locomotion which will serve to signalise some spiritual or psychic grace. Modern literature, as I once had occasion to remark in speaking about the cultural mode of judgment, is at one with advertising in the agitation of the question of who one is, of what kind of person one should want to be, a choice in which one's possessions and appearance, one's taste, are as important as one's feelings and behaviour. It was D. H. Lawrence who said that not until men once again got themselves up in tight red hose and short jerkins that showed the buttocks would they come into a right relation with the sources of life. It was Yeats who asserted the peculiar moral authenticity of grey Connemara cloth.

THE IMPULSE TO CHOOSE, define, and indicate what kind of person one is can scarcely be thought new, and we shall be less inclined to regard it in a facilely pejorative way if we are aware of how deeply rooted it is in human nature, and how we love the charm of spirit it can often manifest. What *is* new is the moralising attitude it now displays—the boldness with which it has moved towards the centre of society. It offers itself as a principle of social organisation; increasingly people find it possible to escape from the old categories of class and to come together in categories of taste. It takes its unabashed place, as I have tried to suggest, in the processes of intellect.

IF IT IS indeed true that the highly moralised taste of our culture does offer itself as a principle of social organisation and takes its place in the processes of the intellect, we must perceive its consonance with the rationale of the English-teaching profession, which, from its beginning in Sidgwick and Arnold, has asserted that the study of literature eventually bears upon the principles of social organisation and upon the right management of the processes of the intellect.

At the heart of the English teaching profession's sense of its function there has long stood Arnold's famous statement, battered but indestructible, that literature is a criticism of life—the profession has never been content to say that its purpose was the development of a responsiveness to literature for its own sake; the study of literature was conceived of as contributing to the power of the intelligence, of the critical intelligence, and the "life" upon which its criticism was to be directed was the social life, or, what for the purposes of the profession was the same thing, the cultural life, the anomalies and inequities of the one, the vulgarities and deficiencies of the other. Here is a recent statement of the aims of English teaching which seems to me to represent the tradition in a comprehensive and accurate way:

> What the intelligent citizen dissatisfied with the cultural state of his society must work for is, first, mere awareness of the position, and then a habit of discrimination in reacting to the present, an attempt to carry forward into the future what is valuable in the past, a readiness to single out the rare good in the present and be ready to proclaim it. Inevitably also he will believe in the power of education as a counter to the trivialising forces of our society. Hence ... education becomes what George Sampson had thought it to be in his *English for the English* in 1922: an active unfitting of the pupil to his future environment. And Sampson foresaw the same means: education through the vernacular language and its literature.[3]

Most people concerned with literary education will be moved to give this statement their assent. It represents, I believe, and not least in its earnestness, the long-established habit of the profession's thought. Yet to assent to it now is not, we must see, the same thing as it was in 1922—it is by no means the same thing to work now for "an active unfitting of the pupil to his future environment" as when George Sampson made his formulation.

In most cultural respects the society of 1922 was probably closer to that of 1867 than to that of the present decade. In either of the earlier times to unfit the pupil to his future environment would have been to detach him from the prejudices and presuppositions—from the "values"—of a single prepotent cultural environment, to expect that he would show himself to be a person of firm character and independent mind, committed to such fortitude as is needed to take up a position outside the cultural environment in which he had his early rearing. We cannot nowadays believe that, in the interests of his best development, we are separating him from so much or putting him to anything like so severe a test. He is not being

[3] Michael Black, "The Third Realm," *The Use of English* (Summer 1964), p. 281.

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sent into the wilderness, alone, a banished man; we can scarcely fail to know that there stands ready to receive him another "environment" in which he is pretty sure to be tolerably comfortable, an environment that is quite thoroughly organised and that has pretty strong roots in the general economy.

THE FACT IS THAT the pupil to-day is at liberty to choose between two cultural environments. One of them can no doubt be described in terms not unlike those that Sidgwick and Arnold found appropriate to the class-bound England of a century ago—it is perhaps less proud and less self-praising, but we can take it to be Philistine and dull, entrenched in unexamined, unpromising beliefs.

The other environment defines itself by its difference from and its antagonism to the first, by its commitment to the "sources of life," its adherence to the imagination of fullness, freedom, and potency of life, and what goes with this imagination, the concern with moralised taste, with the styles that indicate success in the effort to gain control of the sources of life or that are the means of gaining that control.

As thus described, the second environment would seem to be the more appealing of the two. It is here that art resides, and where art is, life is—surely that is true? But as we watch the development of the second cultural environment, we can be less and less certain that it is free of all the traits that we reprobate in the first, which lead us to wish to unfit our students for it. It must always have *some* ethical or spiritual advantage over the other, if only because, even though its influence and its personnel do indeed grow apace, it will never have the actual rule of the world; if its personnel sometimes dreams of actual rule, it yet knows that it would become bored by the dreary routine that rulers must submit to: the blame for the ugly anomalies of rule will therefore always come to rest on Philistine shoulders. But as our students find it easier and easier to take their places in the second cultural environment, as they are ever more certain of finding comfort and companions in it, we have to see that it shows the essential traits of any cultural environment: firm presuppositions, received ideas, approved attitudes, and a system of rewards and punishments. The student who decides to enter it, if he considers it from the distance of some provincial city or town, or of a family strong in whatever class feelings it may have, may understandably take his steps towards it in a dramatic mood, in the belief that he ventures into the uncharted fearsome territory of freedom. In point of fact, as his teachers must know if they have any right sense of our life at the present time, he is joining one of two established cultural parties. If the one he has chosen is in the minority, the party of opposition, this is a position which has recognised advantages.

THIS SITUATION is perhaps not to be deplored. If it inevitably attracts a degree of irony, that may be only because the second environment still finds it useful to its purpose to call upon a pathos which is no longer appropriate to it. Considered objectively, by a cultural historian of the future or a sociologist of the present, the situation of the two environments might be thought of as a wise and prudent way of organising the differences that are natural to a great national society. Many teachers of English might incline to take this view. They will feel that what is referred to in Sidgwick's essay as "a general diffusion of a high cultivation" is manifested by the establishment of the second environment, that a sufficient number of their students prove the development of their intelligence by moving from the old environment to the new, that they will be doing all they might do as teachers if they facilitate the emigration.

But some teachers will not be content to see things so. If they believe that education has the power (and duty) to act as "a counter to the trivialising forces of our society," they may feel that they are not helping to bring that power to bear, that the teaching of literature is perhaps no longer able to serve as the counterbalance to "trivialising forces" it once seemed to be. Having made themselves aware of the existence of the two environments, they may be actually disposed to think that in the very structure of the second there exists a trivialising force. These teachers may feel this the more to the extent that the curriculum responds to the demand, which will be made in the name of "relevance" and "immediacy," that it deal with modern literature. They will perhaps be puzzled to explain the connection between triviality and an emphasis upon modernity, for in all likelihood they will be young or relatively young people who have themselves responded to the

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great classic literature of modern times. That literature itself is not trivial. But there has grown up out of this literature, or around it, a cultural environment which might well lead some serious teachers to think twice before undertaking to prepare their pupils to enter it.

WHAT THEY DISCERN and are dismayed by is perhaps suggested by Saul Bellow, the American novelist, in the remarks he made upon the occasion of a recent award to his latest novel, *Herzog*.

In his brief speech of acceptance Mr. Bellow made fully explicit a view that his novel had expressed only a little less polemically. With some severity, he brought into question the literary tendency which has had so much standing with what we call the "advanced" part of our culture, the tendency to represent modern man as "alienated" and to find in the extent of the writer's own alienation the first measure of his interest and importance. Mr. Bellow dissociated himself from the company of those writers who accept the belief that "modern society is frightful, brutal, hostile to whatever is pure in the human spirit, a waste land and a horror." He did not quite say that this view of the modern condition is false, only that "it is one of the traditions on which literature has lived uncritically." The adversary position that Mr. Bellow takes towards the prevailing powerful dark view has of course been taken many times before, but perhaps never by anyone so fully accredited to the literary public as Mr. Bellow is, so validated by talent, so remote from Philistinism, so reassuringly *modern*.

And Mr. Bellow went on to say that the modern novel is losing its force, that it is on the point of becoming "truly irrelevant" and will indeed become so unless the novelists begin to *think* and "make a clear estimate of our situation." He implicated the critics in the trivialisation of its own existence that literature has brought about:

> . . . The critics must share the blame. They too have failed to describe the situation. Literature has for several generations been its own source, its own province, has lived upon its own traditions, and accepted a romantic separation or estrangement from the common world. This estrangement, though it has produced some masterpieces, has by now enfeebled literature.

This inculpation of the critics is particularly to our present point. One of the commonplaces of the history of modern literature is the brilliant energy of our criticism. Yet if we judge the matter closely, after we have given criticism the praise that is surely its due, we must go on to say that its achievement has been, after all, of an elementary sort. It has taught us how to read certain books; it has not taught us how to engage them.

Modern literature (it need scarcely be said again) is directed towards moral and spiritual renovation; its subject is damnation and salvation. It is a literature of doctrine which, although often concealed, is very aggressive. The occasions are few when criticism has met this doctrine on its own fierce terms. Of modern criticism it can be said that it has instructed us in an intelligent passivity before the beneficent aggression of literature. Attributing to literature virtually angelic powers, it has passed the word to the readers of literature that the one thing you do not do when you meet an angel is wrestle with him.

IF THIS can be said of criticism in general, how much more can it be said of that special form of criticism which is teaching. The teacher's first enterprise is to lead his students to accept what is odd and to understand what is difficult in a work. Often there is no time to do more than this. Often the rigorous examination of the full implications of the work lies beyond the powers of the student even though these powers may be sufficient for a first comprehension. Often, because he has had to give so much energy to its comprehension and exposition, the teacher develops a vested interest in the work and has not the heart to put it to the question.[4] These circumstances are to be understood and forgiven, but perhaps one reason why the modern relation to literature is open to the charge of triviality is that the relation of so many readers to it begins in a classroom experience.

And if we think of Mr. Bellow's speech not primarily in its substance, but only as an event,

[4] I leave out of account the theory, which is influential in academic life but not dominant, that questions of doctrine are wholly irrelevant to literary study. The relation between the vested interest of the teacher of modern literature and the inadequacy or triviality of his response to the literature he teaches may be observed in the files of *Approaches to the Study of Twentieth-Century Literature*, the Proceedings of the Conference that is held annually at Michigan State University.

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and if we then envisage how it will be dealt with by people whom its subject interests, we will have a fair index to the character of what I have been calling the second environment. By now, of course, the speech has become part of the *mythos* of that second enlightened environment. Everyone will have been a little scandalised by it. Some will have been pleased and relieved by it, others angered and embittered. Almost certainly no one will consider in a consequential way whether what was said was right or wrong, in how far right, in how far wrong, why right and why wrong. It will be carried into the realm of gossip, that great new transcendant gossip of the second environment, where it will be used to understand the quality of being, the grace or lack of grace, of the speaker, and to indicate the quality of being, the grace or lack of grace, of those who think it right and of those who think it wrong.

If this is indeed our situation, those few questing teachers I have been imagining, who do not think that they are doing enough in the way of education when they prepare their students for entrance into the second environment, may one day have to reach the point of wondering whether it is any longer possible to believe that the study of literature can lead to the development and refinement of the intelligence. The theory of literary education as it was first formulated conceived of literature as a means of carrying the self beyond the culture, as inducing or allowing the self to detach itself from its bondage to the Idols of the Marketplace, the Tribe, the Theatre, and even of the Cavè. Perhaps literature was once able to do this, or something near enough to it to satisfy the theory. But now we must ask whether, in its new circumstances of public acceptance, the old intention is not inverted, and whether literature does not help to set up the old idols in new forms of its own invention.

THERE IS A PASSAGE in Keats' letters which, when it is read by anyone who has anything to do with literature, should make the earth shake, although it does not; which should momently haunt our minds, although it does not. It is the passage in which Keats, having previously said that poetry is not so fine a thing as philosophy, ends with the phrase, "...An eagle is not so fine a thing as a truth." Considering the man who wrote it, it is an awesome utterance, in part because it appears to be a betrayal of the man's own life. But this was not the only occasion on which Keats reminded us that there is something more important than poetry; in fact, his ability to say this would seem to have been an essential part of his genius as a poet.

"Though a quarrel in the streets is a thing to be hated," he wrote, "the energies displayed in it are fine; the commonest Man shows a grace in his quarrel—By a superior being our reasonings may take the same tone—though erroneous they may be fine—This is the very thing in which consists poetry; and if so it is not so fine a thing as philosophy—For the same reason that an eagle is not so fine a thing as a truth."

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Idol

The sculptor knew it well,
That to locate his god, in wood,
Was to subject its rule.
We know it still,
But sometimes, working on a god,
We are located in hell.

Hugo Williams

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Isaac Bashevis Singer

The Séance

IT WAS DURING the summer of 1946, in the living-room of Mrs. Kopitzky on Central Park West. A single red bulb burned behind a shade adorned with one of Mrs. Kopitzky's automatic drawings—circles with eyes, flowers with mouths, goblets with fingers. The walls were all hung with Lotte Kopitzky's paintings, which she did in a state of trance and at the direction of her control—Bhaghavar Krishna, a Hindu sage supposed to have lived in the 4th century. It was he, Bhaghavar Krishna, who had painted the peacock with the golden tail, in the middle of which appeared the image of Buddha; the otherworldly trees hung with elf-locks and fantastic fruits; the young women of the planet Venus with their branch-like arms and their ears from which stretched silver nets—organs of telepathy. Over the pictures, the old furniture, the shelves with books, there hovered reddish shadows. The windows were covered with heavy drapes.

At the round table on which lay a ouija-board, a trumpet, and a withered rose, sat Dr. Zorach Gombiner, small, broad-shouldered, bald in front and with sparse tufts of hair in the back, half yellow, half grey. From behind his yellow bushy brows peered a pair of small, piercing eyes. Dr. Gombiner had almost no neck—his head sat directly on his broad shoulders making him look like a primitive African statue. His nose was crooked, flat at the top, the tip split in two. On his chin sprouted a tiny growth. It was hard to tell whether this was a remnant of a beard or just a hairy wart. The face was wrinkled, badly shaven, and grimy. He wore a black corduroy jacket, a white shirt covered with ash and coffee stains, and a crooked bow tie.

When conversing with Mrs. Kopitzky, he spoke an odd mixture of Yiddish and German. "What's keeping our friend Bhaghavar Krishna? Did he lose his way in the spheres of heaven?"

"Dr. Gombiner, don't rush me," Mrs. Kopitzky answered, "we cannot give them orders . . . they have their motives and their moods. Have a little patience."

"Well, if one must, one must."

Dr. Gombiner drummed his fingers on the table. From each finger sprouted a little red beard. Mrs. Kopitzky leaned her head on the back of the upholstered chair, and prepared to fall into a trance. Against the dark glow of the red bulb, one could discern her freshly dyed hair, black without lustre, waved into tiny ringlets; her rouged face, the broad nose, high cheekbones, and eyes spread far apart and heavily lined with mascara. Dr. Gombiner often joked that she looked like a painted bulldog. Her husband, Leon Kopitzky, a dentist, had died eighteen years before, leaving no children. The widow supported herself on an annuity from an insurance company. In 1929 she had lost her fortune in the Wall Street crash, but had recently begun to buy securities again on the advice of her ouija-board, planchette, and crystal ball. Mrs. Kopitzky even asked Bhaghavar Krishna for tips on the races. In a few cases, he had divulged in dreams the names of winning horses.

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Dr. Gombiner bowed his head and covered his eyes with his hands, muttering to himself as solitary people often do. "Well, I've played the fool enough. This is the last night. Even from *kreplach* one has enough."

"Did you say something, Doctor?"

"What? Nothing."

"When you rush me, I can't fall into the trance."

"Trance-shmance," Dr. Gombiner grumbled to himself. "The ghost is late, that's all. Who does she think she's fooling? Just crazy —*meshuga*."

Aloud, he said: "I'm not rushing you, I've plenty of time. If what the Americans say about time is right, I'm a second Rockefeller."

As Mrs. Kopitzky opened her mouth to answer, her double chin, with all its warts trembled, revealing a set of huge false teeth. Suddenly she threw back her head and sighed. She closed her eyes, and snorted once. Dr. Gombiner gaped at her questioningly, sadly. He had not yet heard the sound of the outside door opening, but Mrs. Kopitzky who probably had the acute hearing of an animal, might have. Dr. Gombiner began to rub his temples and his nose, and then clutched at his tiny beard.

There was a time when he had tried to understand all things through his reason, but that period of rationalism had long passed. Since then, he had constructed an anti-rationalistic philosophy, a kind of extreme hedonism which saw in eroticism the *"Ding an Sich,"* and in reason the very lowest stage of being, the entropy which led to absolute death. His position had been a curious compound of von Hartmann's idea of the Unconscious with the Kabbalah of Rabbi Isaac Lurie, according to which all things, from the smallest grain of sand to the very Godhead itself, are Copulation and Union. It was because of this system that Dr. Gombiner had come from Paris to New York in 1939, leaving behind in Poland his father, a rabbi, a wife who refused to divorce him, and a lover, Nella, with whom he had lived for years in Berlin and later in Paris. It so happened that when Dr. Gombiner left for America, Nella went to visit her parents in Warsaw. He had planned to bring her over to the United States as soon as he found a translator, a publisher, and a chair at one of the American universities.

In those days Dr. Gombiner had still been hopeful. He had been offered a cathedra in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem; a publisher in Palestine was about to issue one of his books; his essays had been printed in Zurich and Paris. But with the outbreak of the Second World War, his life began to deteriorate. His literary agent suddenly died, his translator was inept, and to make matters worse, absconded with a good part of the manuscript, of which there was no copy. In the Yiddish press, for some strange reason the reviewers turned hostile and hinted that he was a charlatan. The Jewish organisations which arranged lectures for him cancelled his tour. According to his own philosophy, he had believed that all suffering was nothing more than negative expressions of universal eroticism—Hitler, Stalin, the Nazis who sang the Horst Wessel song and made the Jews wear yellow armbands, were actually searching for new forms and variations of sexual salvation. But Dr. Gombiner began to doubt his own system and fell into despair. He had to leave his hotel and move into a cheap furnished room. He wandered about in shabby clothes, sat all day in cafeterias, drank endless cups of coffee, smoked bad cigars, and barely managed to survive on the few dollars that a relief organisation gave him each month. The refugees whom he met spread all sorts of rumours about visas for those left behind in Europe, packages of food and medicines that could be sent them through various agencies, ways of bringing over relatives from Poland through Honduras, Cuba, Brazil. But he, Zorach Gombiner, could save no one from the Nazis. He had received only a single letter from Nella.

Only in New York had Dr. Gombiner realised how attached he was to his mistress. Without her, he became impotent.

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II

EVERYTHING was exactly as it had been yesterday and the day before. Bhaghavar Krishna began to speak in English with his foreign voice that was half male and half female, duplicating Mrs. Kopitzky's errors in pronunciation and grammar. Lotte Kopitzky came from a village in the Carpathian Mountains. Dr. Gombiner could never discover her nationality—Hungarian, Rumanian, Galician? She knew no Polish nor German, and little English; even her Yiddish had been corrupted through her long years in America. Actually she had been left languageless and Bhaghavar Krishna spoke her various jargons. At first Dr. Gombiner had asked Bhaghavar Krishna the details of his earthly existence but had been told by Bhaghavar Krishna that he had forgotten everything in the heavenly mansions in which he dwelt. All he could recall was that he had lived in the suburbs of Madras. Bhaghavar Krishna did not even know that in that part of India Tamil was spoken. When Dr. Gombiner tried to converse with him about Sanskrit, the *Mahabharata* the *Ramayana*, the *Sakuntala*, Bhaghavar Krishna replied that he was no longer interested in terrestrial literature. Bhaghavar Krishna knew nothing but a few theosophic and spiritualistic brochures and magazines which Mrs. Kopitzky subscribed to.

For Dr. Gombiner it was all one big joke; but if one lived in a bug-ridden room and had a stomach spoiled by cafeteria food, if one was in one's sixties and completely without family, one became tolerant of all kinds of crackpots. He had been introduced to Mrs. Kopitzky in 1942, took part in scores of her séances, read her automatic writings, admired her automatic paintings, listened to her automatic symphonies. A few times he had borrowed money from her which he had been unable to return. He ate at her house—vegetarian suppers, since Mrs. Kopitzky touched neither meat, fish, milk, nor eggs, but only fruits and vegetables which mother earth produces. She specialised in preparing salads with nuts, almonds, pomegranates, avocados.

In the beginning, Lotte Kopitzky had wanted to draw him into a romance. The spirits were all of the opinion that Lotte Kopitzky and Zorach Gombiner derived from the same spiritual origin: *The Great White Lodge*. Even Bhaghavar Krishna had a taste for match-making. Lotte Kopitzky constantly conveyed to Dr. Gombiner regards from The Masters, who had connections with Tibet, Atlantis, the Heavenly Hierarchy, the *Shamballa*, the Fourth Kingdom of Nature and the Council of Sanat Kumara. In heaven as on the earth, in the early 'forties, all kinds of crises were brewing. The Powers having realigned themselves, the members of the Ashrams were preparing a war on Cosmic Evil. The Hierarchy sent out projectors to light up the planet Earth, and to find esoteric men and women to serve special purposes. Mrs. Kopitzky assured Dr. Gombiner that he was ordained to play a huge part in the Universal Rebirth. But he had neglected this mission, disappointed the Masters. He had promised to telephone, but didn't. He spent months in Philadelphia without dropping her a postcard. He returned without informing her. Mrs. Kopitzky ran into him in an automat on Sixth Avenue and found him in a torn coat, a dirty shirt, and shoes worn so thin they no longer had heels. He had not even applied for United States citizenship, though refugees were entitled to citizenship without going abroad to get a visa.

Now, in 1946, everything that Lotte Kopitzky had prophesied had come true. All had passed over to the other side—his father, his brothers, his sisters, Nella. Bhaghavar Krishna brought messages from them. The Masters still remembered Dr. Gombiner, and still had plans for him in connection with the Centennial Conference of the Hierarchy. Even the fact that his family had perished in Treblinka, Maidanek, Stutthof, was closely connected with the Powers of Light, the Development of Karma, the New Cycle after Lemuria, and with the aim of leading humanity to a new ascent in Love and a new Aquatic Epoch.

During the last few weeks, Mrs. Kopitzky

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had become dissatisfied with summoning Nella's spirit in the usual way. Dr. Gombiner was given the rare opportunity of coming into contact with Nella's materialised form. It happened in this way: Bhaghavar Krishna would give a sign to Dr. Gombiner that he should walk down the dark corridor to Mrs. Kopitzky's bedroom. There in the darkness, near Mrs. Kopitzky's bureau, an apparition hovered which was supposed to be Nella. She murmured to Dr. Gombiner in Polish, spoke caressing words into his ear, brought him messages from friends and relatives. Bhaghavar Krishna had admonished Dr. Gombiner time and again not to try to touch the phantom, because contact could cause severe injury to both, to him and Mrs. Kopitzky. The few times that he sought to approach her, she deftly eluded him. But confused though Dr. Gombiner was by these episodes, he was aware that they were contrived. This was not Nella, neither her voice nor her manner. The messages he received proved nothing. He had mentioned all these names to Mrs. Kopitzky and had been questioned by her. But Dr. Gombiner remained curious: Who was the apparition? Why did she act the part? Probably for money. But the fact that Lotte Kopitzky was capable of hiring a ghost proved that she was not only a self-deceiver, but a swindler of others as well. Every time Dr. Gombiner walked down the dark corridor, he murmured, "Crazy, *meshuga*, a ridiculous woman."

TO-NIGHT Dr. Gombiner could hardly wait for Bhaghavar Krishna's signal. He was tired of these absurdities. For years he had suffered from a prostate condition and now had to urinate every half-hour. A Warsaw doctor who was not allowed to practise in America but did so clandestinely nonetheless, had warned Dr. Gombiner not to postpone an operation, because complications might arise. But Gombiner neither had the money for the hospital, nor the will to go there. He sought to cure himself with baths, hot-water bottles, and with pills he had brought with him from France. He even tried to massage his prostate gland himself. As a rule, he went to the bathroom the moment he arrived at Mrs. Kopitzky's, but this evening he had neglected to do so. He felt a pressure on his bladder. The raw vegetables which Mrs. Kopitzky had given him to eat made his intestines twist. "Well, I'm too old for such pleasures," he murmured. As Bhaghavar Krishna spoke, Dr. Gombiner could scarcely listen. "What is she babbling, the idiot? She's not even a decent ventriloquist."

The instant Bhaghavar Krishna gave his usual sign Dr. Gombiner got up. His legs had been troubling him greatly, but had never been as shaky as to-night. "Well, I'll go to the bathroom first," he decided. To reach the bathroom in the dark was not easy. Dr. Gombiner walked hesitantly, his hands outstretched, trying to feel his way. When he had reached the bathroom and opened the door, someone inside pulled the knob back. "It is she, the girl," Dr. Gombiner realised. So shaken was he that he forgot why he was there. "She most probably came here to undress." He was embarrassed both for himself and Mrs. Kopitzky. "What does she need it for, for whom is she playing this comedy?" His eyes had become accustomed to the dark. He had seen the girl's silhouette. The bathroom had a window giving on to the street, and the shimmer of the street lamp had fallen on to it. She was small, broadish, with a high bosom. She appeared to have been in her underwear. Dr. Gombiner stood there hypnotised. He wanted to cry out, "Enough, it's all so obvious," but his tongue was numb. His heart pounded, and he could hear his own breathing.

After a while, he began to retrace his steps but he was dazed with blindness. He bumped into a clothes tree, and hit a wall, striking his head. He stepped backwards. Something fell and broke. Perhaps one of Mrs. Kopitzky's otherworldly sculptures! At that moment, the telephone began to ring, the sound unusually loud and menacing. Dr. Gombiner shivered. He suddenly felt a warmth in his underwear. He had wet himself like a child.

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III

"Well, I've reached the bottom," Dr. Gombiner muttered to himself. "I'm ready for the junkyard." He walked towards the bedroom. Not only his underwear, his pants also had become wet. He expected Mrs. Kopitzky to answer the telephone; it happened more than once that she awakened from her trance to discuss stocks, bonds, and dividends. But the telephone kept on ringing. Only now he realised what he had done —he had closed the living-room door, shutting out the red glow which helped him find his way. "I'm going home," he resolved. He turned towards the street door, but found he had lost all sense of direction in that labyrinth of an apartment. He touched a knob and turned it. He heard a muffled scream. He had wandered into the bathroom again. There seemed to be no hook or chain inside. Again he saw the woman in a corset, but this time with her face half in the light. In that split second he knew she was middle-aged.

"Forgive, please." And he moved back.

The telephone stopped ringing, then began anew. Suddenly, Dr. Gombiner glimpsed a shaft of red light and heard Mrs. Kopitzky walking towards the telephone. He stopped, and said, half statement, half question, "Mrs. Kopitzky!"

Mrs. Kopitzky started. "Already finished?"

"I'm not well, I must go home."

"Not well? Where do you want to go? What's the matter? Your heart?"

"Everything."

"Wait a second."

Mrs. Kopitzky having approached him, took his arm and led him back to the living-room. The telephone continued to ring and then finally fell silent. "Did you get a pressure in your heart, huh?" Mrs. Kopitzky asked. "Lie down on the sofa, I'll get a doctor."

"No, no, not necessary."

"I'll massage you."

"My bladder is not in order, my prostate gland."

"What? I'll put on the light."

He wanted to ask her not to do so, but she had already turned on a number of lamps. The light glared in his eyes. She stood looking at him and at his wet pants. Her head shook from side to side. Then she said, "This is what comes from living alone."

"Really, I'm ashamed of myself."

"What's the shame? We all get older. Nobody gets younger. Were you in the bathroom?"

Dr. Gombiner didn't answer.

"Wait a moment, I still have *his* clothes. I had a premonition I would need them someday."

Mrs. Kopitzky left the room. Dr. Gombiner sat down on the edge of a chair, placing his handkerchief beneath him. He sat there stiff, wet, childishly guilty and helpless, and yet with that inner quiet that comes from illness. For years, he had been afraid of doctors, hospitals, and especially nurses who deny their feminine shyness and treat grown-up men like babies. Now he was prepared for the last degradations of the body. "Well, I'm finished, *kaputt*." . . . He made a swift summation of his existence. "Philosophy? what philosophy? Eroticism? whose eroticism?" He had played with phrases for years, had come to no conclusions. What had happened to him, in him, all that had taken place in Poland, in Russia, on the planets, on the far-away galaxies, could not be reduced either to Schopenhauer's blind will, nor to his, Gombiner's, eroticism. It was explained neither by Spinoza's substance, Leibniz's monads, Hegel's dialectic, or Heckel's monism. "They all just juggle words like Mrs. Kopitzky. It's better that I didn't publish all that scribbling of mine. What's the good of all these preposterous hypotheses? They don't help at all. . . ." He looked up at Mrs. Kopitzky's pictures on the wall, and in the blazing light they resembled the smearings of school children. From the street came the honking of cars, the screams of boys, the thundering echo of the subway as a train passed. The door opened and Mrs. Kopitzky entered with a bundle of clothes: a jacket, pants, and shirt, and underwear. The clothes smelled of mothballs and dust. She said to him, "Have you been in the bedroom?"

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"What? No."

"Nella didn't materialise?"

"No, she didn't materialise."

"Well, change your clothes. Don't let me embarrass you."

She put the bundle on the sofa and bent over Dr. Gombiner with the devotion of a relative. She said, "You'll stay here. Tomorrow I'll send for your things."

"No, that's senseless."

"I knew that this would happen the moment we were introduced on Second Avenue."

"How so? Well, it's all the same."

"*They* tell me things in advance. I look at someone, and I know what will happen to him."

"So? When am I going to go?"

"You still have to live many years. You're needed here. You have to finish your work."

"My work has the same value as your ghosts."

"There are ghosts, there are! Don't be so cynical. They watch over us from above, they lead us by the hand, they measure our steps. We are much more important to the Cyclic Revival of the Universe than you imagine."

He wanted to ask her, "Why then, did you have to hire a woman to deceive me?" but he remained silent. Mrs. Kopitzky went out again. Dr. Gombiner took off his pants and his underwear and dried himself with his handkerchief. For a while he stood with his upper part fully dressed and his pants off like some mad jester. Then he stepped into a pair of loose drawers that were as cool as shrouds. He pulled on a pair of striped pants that were too wide and too long for him. He had to draw the pants up until the hem reached his knees. He gasped and snorted, had to stop every few seconds to rest. Suddenly he remembered! This was exactly how as a boy he had dressed himself in his father's clothes when his father napped after the Sabbath pudding: the old man's white trousers, his satin robe, his fringed garment, his fur hat. Now his father had become a pile of ashes somewhere in Poland, and he, Zorach, put on the musty clothes of a dentist. He walked to the mirror, and looked at himself, even stuck out his tongue like a child. Then he lay down on the sofa. The telephone rang again, and Mrs. Kopitzky apparently answered it, because this time the ringing stopped immediately. Dr. Gombiner closed his eyes, and lay quietly. He had nothing to hope for. There was not even anything to think about.

He dozed off and found himself in the cafeteria on 42nd Street, near the Public Library. He was breaking off pieces of an egg cooky. A refugee was telling him how to save relatives in Poland by dressing them up in Nazi uniforms. Later they would be led to ships to the North Pole, the South Pole, and across the Pacific. Agents were prepared to take charge of them in Tierra del Fuego, in Honolulu and Yokohama. . . . How strange, but that smuggling had something to do with his, Zorach Gombiner's, philosophic system, not with his former version but a new one which blended eroticism with memory. While he was combining all these images, he asked himself in astonishment, "What kind of relationship can there be between sex, memory, and the redemption of the ego? And how will it work in infinite time? It's nothing but casuistry, casuistry. It's a way of explaining my own impotence. And how can I bring over Nella when she has already perished? Unless death itself is nothing but a sexual amnesia." He awoke and saw Mrs. Kopitzky bending over him with a pillow which she was about to put behind his head.

"How do you feel?"

"Has Nella left?" he asked, amazed at his own words. He must still be half asleep.

Mrs. Kopitzky winced. Her double chin shook and trembled. Her dark eyes were filled with motherly reproach. "You're laughing, huh? There is no death, there isn't any. We live forever, and we love forever. This is the pure truth."

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Ted Hughes

X

A Dialogue

From "Eat Crow", A Piece for Radio

MORGAN: I had exploded, a bombcloud, lobheaded, my huge fingers
Came feeling over the fields, like shadows.
I became smaller than water, I stained into the soil-crumble.
I became smaller.
My eyes fell out of my head and into an atom.
My right leg stood in the room, raving at me like a dog.
I tried to stifle its bloody mouth with a towel
But it ran on ahead. I stumbled after it
A long way and came to a contraption like a trap
Baited with human intestines.
A stone drummed and an eye watched me out of a cat's anus.
I swam upstream, cleansed, in the snow-water, upstream,
Till I grew tired and turned over. I slept.
When I woke I could hear voices, many voices,
It was my bones all chattering together
At the high tide mark, bedded in rubble, littered among shells
And gull feathers. The breastbone was crying:
"I begot a million and murdered a million:
I was a leopard," and "No, no, no, no,
We were a fine woman," a rib cried.
"No, we were swine, we had devils, and the axe halved us,"
The pelvis was shouting. And the bones of the foot
And the bones of the hand, fought: "We were alligators,
We dragged some beauties under, we did not let go."
And "We were suffering oxen," and "I was a surgeon,"
And, "We were a stinking clot of ectoplasm that suffocated a nun
Then lay for years in a cobbler's cellar."
The teeth sang and the vertebrae were screeching
Something incomprehensible. I tried to creep away—
I got up and ran. I tried to get up and run
But they saw me. "There he is," they shouted.
They saw me. "It's him, it's him again, get him."
They came shrieking after me and I ran.
I ran. I ran. And as I ran
A freezing hand caught hold of me by the hair
And lifted me off my feet and set me high
Over the whole earth on a blazing star
Called Cancer.

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SHE: A crow is a sign of life. Even though it sits motionless.

MORGAN: And a man, lying alone, among stones, with a rifle, lying limply, in a waterless land, in a grey desert of tumbled stone, with one bullet, a man dryer than a lizard, is a sign of life. Even though he does not move.

SHE: The crow watches the man.

MORGAN: Between the crow and the man, across three hundred yards of primaeval stone, a horrible connection has found its way. Now these two can never separate.

The stones are in their usual trance, rapt to the circles of galactic dust. They hear nothing of the music of silence these two make together, these two silent, living ones, alone with each other in the stone land.

The furnace roars in the silent man, and the crow glitters, in the early light, molten bronze and phosphors settling in its darkness, set out to cool, fresh from the furnace. The crow ruffles.

SHE: The crow is composed of terrible black voice. It is neither stone nor light. But voice that can hardly utter. It looks this way and that. The forms of the stones, the fractures of heavenly accident, the resolute quality of light, hold the crow anaesthetised, every hour deeper in patience, resigned to the superior stamina of the empty horizon, limber and watchful.

MORGAN: The laws are still with the living.

SHE: The crow arrived before dawn, smelling the man, and settling to watch at extreme range.

MORGAN: And when he saw the crow, in the blue thinning light, the man gave thanks to the studded, baleful pallor of the heavens, and to this strange-faced company of stones. His prayer has produced not quails and not manna. A crow has come up from the maker of the world.

SHE: The crow watches the man.

Jon Silkin

Iris

Three extended tongue-like
Petals fall outwards.
A black, finely haired purple
Covers their extremities.
This colour suggests sap,
Like blood, gathering in pressure and staleness
At petal-ends that hang
Unable to sustain
Their weight. Where the joins
Of those three start
Are three smaller shapes,
Not striped like the first three.
Above these a further three,
As if a mimic of the second,
Suggesting consciousness.
A ridge is on each outer petal.
It is a fur of stigmas
Curved over the widening tongue,
Between three uplifted pale violet portions,
A coarse furred ridge, and like
One furred lip of the vulva.
In the curves of the flower
That are like an ear
One smaller ear listening advisedly at the larger,
Is the stamen, erect and white,
With its anther white. It is the male part
That is hidden, the female proffered.
Its colouring is determined,
Powerful; one band of it
Repeated, enforcing itself.
The species is prized for its shape,
Its chosen periodicity
Of flowering, a man's mind
Propped by growth that does
Not choose to grow.

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Norman Macrae

The Faults in the Dynamos

A Probe into "The Men at the Top"

WHAT I should like to consider are the faults of the ablest men in managing positions in Britain today: in industry, the civil service and politics. Their faults are much more interesting, although more rarely discussed, than the faults of the deadheads who have got into other managing positions in Britain through original nepotism, or accident, or continuing willingness to stick in a conventional rut without annoying the man previously up top.

My subject, then, is the faults in the dynamos: in the managing directors who invariably work behind desks kept immaculately clear;[1] in the best of the permanent secretaries in a British civil service which is still—at top level—probably abler than any other (not excluding the now wildly uneven French one); in the sorts of political personalities who escape lampooning in *Private Eye*; in the men who are visibly rising towards these managing positions in the near future; in the men who are generally called "the hopes of the country." And, of course, in a real sense, they *are* the hopes of the country. But I have come to believe that the commonest flaws in the dynamos are distinctly analysable, usually according to their different age groups and the experience through which those different age groups have passed.

Of course, everything said here is going to be set down in terms of terribly broad generality. Of course, there are many exceptions to the crude type-casting I am going to attempt. Can I take the usual saving phrase about "with many exceptions" as being read, now and everywhere else where it ought to be inserted, and then get on with the argument? The most popular form of economic writing in Britain today is the sort which explains all our economic ills in terms of what terrible people we all are, especially "at management level"; to which the usual huffy reply is that "some British managers are the best in the world." But one of my points here is going to be that both critiques and encomiums often apply to the qualities of men who are fading out; and neither concern themselves enough with the qualities and failings of the new men who are coming up.

The Septuagenarians' Legacy

LITTLE NEED BE SAID about the generation of dynamos which is nearly extinct: the septuagenarians, whose virtues and faults were often greatly affected by the fact that they served in the trenches in the Kaiser's war, and who generally had an extraordinary sense of comradeship (though often, unfortunately, comradeship only within their own class) which their successors have persistently failed to appreciate or understand. With the retirement of Harold Macmillan, this generation of septuagenarians has moved out of top politics anyway, and it was retired five to ten years ago from the top of the civil service. In the business world some of Field Marshal Haig's ex-officers still hang on unfaded in nominally top posts, but generally only as chairmen with misty influence rather than as managing directors or other executives who exercise the day-to-day power.

There were, however, three characteristics of

[1] In the six-and-a-half most valuable pages in their 290-page study of British management *P.E.P.* set down 59 merciless criteria by which each manager can judge whether he himself is a sleepy or a thrusting character. I am not suggesting that even the most dynamic British industrial leader could give himself an alpha on all 59 questions, or at least he would be an alpha-class self-deceiver if he did. But at any rate the sorts of eager dynamos discussed here would, if they got the book, go through the list with occasional purrs of self-satisfaction as well as periodic pangs of bad conscience. Incidentally, since *P.E.P.* is an organisation that needs to be encouraged, they should all be urged to buy the book and try. *Thrusters and Sleepers*, Allen and Unwin, 35s., pages 189–195.

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this generation of today's septuagenarians which are worth mention, because they have wrought major influences which still in some sense persist in the industrial and political world today. First, they were generally extremely bad at choosing their immediate successors; they worked mostly on the hierarchical principle, and were very loath to skip a generation in passing on their batons (although the harrowing military experiences of their youth sometimes made them remarkably fierce against those of the next generation who had seemed in any sense anti-war; Macmillan's antipathy to R. A. Butler sprang quite largely from Munich days, Clement Attlee's to Herbert Morrison partly from his attitude in 1914–18). I will argue later that these immediate successors are themselves beginning to work on much less hierarchal lines in choosing *their* own successors, and are indeed making almost a fetish of giving youth its chance. But they are committing other and different mistakes.

Secondly, this departing generation had a great sense of the ceremonial, which is totally foreign to everybody who has come after them. A main reason may be that this was the last group who were still used to having domestic servants in their homes through all the most formative years of their adult lives. In business this dignity complex has had an impeding effect on—at any rate—the sales policies which they have left behind them. And on some other segments of business enterprise too.

Thirdly, many of these men had a sloppy habit of mentally detaching themselves from the main intellectual problems which should at any one time be engaging their attention. In the great men of politics of this generation, like Macmillan and Attlee and some others (who later went into industry, so I can't mention them without libel), this sloppy detachment was called "showing a rare sense of history." But in the boardrooms and the civil service world, it looked more like a ghastly sort of bumbling, which is what it was.

THESE THREE CHARACTERISTICS—an inability to pick the right successors, a love of ceremonial, and sometimes a certain exaggerated detachment from details like full efficiency—do not seem to have affected British veterans only. Some of them also point up some of the faults of high figures of this departing generation on the continent of Europe, including Konrad Adenauer and Charles de Gaulle. But in Britain, because of the class system, these characteristics assumed a greater importance, and have indeed often wrongly been ascribed as merely faults of the class system itself. It was largely to describe the top men of this generation of today's septuagenarians that the term the "Establishment" was first invented and applied. Because the "Establishment" is a convenient term, it is now being applied to the men who have taken their places in their old jobs: especially to today's sexagenarians or near-sexagenarians who have come along. But the faults of this slightly newer generation are different, and if we go on thinking that the exact sins of the old Establishment are their sins too, we will make a great mistake.

The Present Inheritance

ONE HAS AN AVERSION to describing the generations of Britain's top men so largely in terms of their experiences in wartime; it seems to be a terribly Tory thing to do. But war experience is also an important distinguishing characteristic of the next generation to come under scrutiny now: not because they served at the front, but because they didn't. I have tried to think of some more elegant way of describing this next generation, now largely in power, than as the "ex-reserved occupationists"; but I can't.

By the time that wartime conscription really got going, in 1940–41, the top men I am considering here had generally reached a position of sufficient importance in their firms, or in other occupations, to merit being reserved from military service. An able man would often have made such a mark by about the age of 30; which would make him aged 54 or over now. But the age range sometimes goes lower than that. Quite a few able men in their twenties were also reserved during the war. The present Prime Minister of England is one of them. Hugh Gaitskell also belonged to this group. There has always seemed to me to be a definable difference in many of their attitudes from other politicians who served in the active armed forces, whether they are politicians on the Labour or Conservative side. In the top ranks of the civil service, it is even commoner to find that top men now aged 50 or more were in reserved occupations in the war. In managerial posts in industry, the average age of ex-reserved occupationists is rather older; but there too some

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quite distinct working attitudes of this group can be defined. They can best be explained by looking back to the experiences through which these men passed.

Although he will usually hotly deny any such feeling, the brilliant youngish archetype who stayed behind during the war began by feeling very guilty about it. Since there were not the same terrible casualties as during the Kaiser's war, he rightly felt by *VE*-day that he could purge his conscience in this respect; but one interesting inheritance from his initial guilt feeling often affects his working habits to this day. Throughout most of the war he always felt that, as he was not actually at the front, he was being terribly unpatriotic if he just sat about doing no work in the evenings. It is therefore this age group which still provides the main slaves to their briefcases. It is often they—not those slightly younger or older—who take back home enormous and quite unnecessary loads of working papers in the evenings, while Mr. Macmillan and Mr. Attlee sat reading Trollope. The younger *confrères* head for the golf course or for dining out.

During the war, these men also had their first experience of fairly important managerial positions within the confines of a fully-planned economy, which was a sensible form of economy for that time. They are therefore not—even in the higher reaches of private industry—anti-planning. They instinctively believe in committees and trade associations and things like that. They are also not really as vigorously opposed to restrictive practices as the bright men who did not have this wartime managerial experience; or rather, they will generally say that the right way to break down restrictive practices, especially among the trade unions, but perhaps also among employers, is by discussion in committee, rather than by direct action.

Again, although they pay loud lip service to competition and the widest possible opening of markets, they do not always follow their precepts in practice. It was therefore from this group that any *intellectual* opposition to the idea of Britain joining the Common Market largely came. I do not refer here to the non-intellectual opposition, the "distrust-those-foreigners" kind of line, which was as liable to come from ex-Brigadiers as from anybody; but to the intellectual opposition which one often did not expect (generally from the politicians and dons; civil servants and industrialists of this generation did not suffer so much from it, for reasons I will touch on below). Because the Labour party played out its disagreements on the subject most openly, it provides the best goldfish bowl to peer into.

The difference between Labour's intellectual anti-marketeers (*e.g.* Hugh Gaitskell, Harold Wilson, Douglas Jay) and intellectual pro-marketeers (*e.g.* Roy Jenkins, Anthony Crosland) seemed to me to spring freely from the experience of the former group as civil servants during the war, followed by lack of experience of the needs of policy after 1951. This indeed was the one really pernicious influence that wartime civil service life left behind it. These men's initial administrative experience had been totally concerned with planning within certain cosily confined limits; the vital idea of the need for wider markets, and for looking not just at the trends of current trading figures but at new burgeoning forces which could be expected to change these trends themselves, was something that just did not come naturally to anybody with their experience.

The third important experience of the age group of "ex-reserved-occupationists" is that, partly because they had stayed behind during the war, and acquired seniority, they were often in fairly important managerial positions in the period from 1945–51. This was another traumatic period for them, especially—this time—for those in industry. For in that period of the demand-inflation, ration-book, shopping-queue economy, any fool could make money for his firm; and quite a few did. The abler men, who saw their ability of no more value than the ineptitude of the form-fillers, quite enormously resented it. And from that period a number of extremely important and deleterious resultant attitudes have sprung up among this particular generation.

First, in attitudes to sales policy. Sales and marketing departments of firms were not really important in the days when anything that was made would be readily snapped up in any shop; and many men of this generation which experienced 1945–51 have never quite been able to shake off the implicit assumption that sales and advertising policies are really things to be handled by "spivs." This is therefore one attitude that the sexagenarians share with the septuagenarians, and in some cases a sort of anti-Americanism became attached to it, because

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America was to them the recognised home of the vulgar hard sell. In industry, although academic intellectuals are always infuriated to be told this, opposition to commercial television and fiery support for the Suez operation tended to come from precisely the same group.

Secondly, in attitudes to make do and mend. The anti-waste campaign during the war, when it was actually a criminal offence in Britain to throw away a loaf of bread that had gone bad, has bitten deeply into the upper class British mentality; more, I think, among those who were on the civilian front than at the fighting front. Moreover, the conversion of industry during the war to making swords instead of ploughshares, and then back again in the days of austerity, was a conversion that rested quite largely on patching up. The infamous British attachment to old machines, instead of new ones, has its roots most firmly embedded in this generation. So has the idea of converting, say, railway workshops, which used to make steam locomotives that are no longer needed, to making other locomotives (because they are called railway workshops)—even if outside research shows that it would be many times more economic to build entirely new plants, somewhere else, from scratch.

Thirdly, in attitudes to economic policy, and in attachment to what is now at last rudely called "stop-go." Between 1945–51, there is no doubt that there was a state of over-demand in British industry, and in the most extreme sense. We all, therefore, got used to assuming in 1945–51 that all the ills of the British economy arose from excess of demand, and so at that time most of them did. But what has happened three times in the last nine years of insufficient industrial expansion is that some of the ills which used to be associated with excess demand (such as an intermittent weakness of sterling on the exchanges) have returned—and in conditions where future economic historians will be able to point out bewilderedly that excess demand could not reasonably be ascribed as the main fault. But we have gone on cutting demand nevertheless. We have suffered here in a grievous form from the evil against which John Maynard Keynes fulminated in the *General Theory*:

> in the field of economic and political philosophy there are not many who are influenced by new theories after they are 25 or 30 years of age, so that the ideas which civil servants and politicians and even agitators apply to current events are not likely to be the newest.

Not all economists under the age of 40 would agree wholeheartedly with all my criticisms of recent stop-go policies; I am an extremist in this respect. But most would agree at least partly with them. Among those who were already in positions of some influence in 1945–51, by contrast, instinctive attachment to internal bloodletting as a cure for external haemorrhage is almost complete.

THESE, THEN, ARE the main characteristics of the top men of the generation of "ex-reserved occupationists": attachment to hard work, a lot of it quite unnecessary; a tendency to look inward to what is misnamed central planning, rather than outward to wider markets and competition; lack of understanding of sales policy; a rather spurious attachment to modernisation, overlaid by an excessive willingness to make do and mend; a belief that, in the last resort, "it must be right" to meet any sort of sterling exchange crisis by at least some cuts in demand. And this generation, to repeat, is the generation which fills the most important places in the Labour Cabinet, in the civil service, and probably in most branches of industry right now. Unfortunately, the generation which is coming immediately behind them is, in many respects, rather worse.

The Ex-Officers' Misfortune

I AM AFRAID that the following remarks are going to cause offence. They are going to argue that the ex-officers of the Second World War have, in general, failed to make a successful mark on the business and administrative life of the country.

I have formed a fairly definite theory that the sort of war the Americans fought in the Pacific tended to produce a more successful type for managing the post-war world (an archetype here was President Kennedy) than the sort of war Kennedy's contemporaries in Britain fought, mainly in Europe. Take the example of a 48-year-old member of Britain's practical intellectual establishment to-day, who came out of the war in 1945 at the age of 28, perhaps having risen as high (remember we are talking of the cream) as lieutenant-colonel. The sort of war he was liable to have fought in his impressionable youth might have been: four years sitting in boredom and training duties in Britain from 1940–44; one year of military action, but sweeping across Europe as part of a very compact army, squashed into a narrow

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front, with not (if truth be told) much room or requirement or training for initiative; followed by perhaps one year in the utterly demoralising duty of occupying a destroyed Germany.

He would have been likely in this army career to have had experience of what the army calls "handling men." It was, however, quite the wrong experience. The whole basis of a conscript officer's job was that he must not "undermine the authority" even of absolute asses, either junior officers or old-fashioned N.C.Os beneath him; and certainly must not try to set about reforming the way that the army was run. In the *RAF* the Brylcreem boys of wartime aircrew had less training still for efficiency in the post-war world; we schooled ourselves, off duty, to be a group of amiable dilettantes. It is probably the naval officers who have done best in post-war business; helping to run a ship was, in some sense, an accustomisation in helping to run something real. But here, too, there was the great handicap of the suave conventionalism that is the Royal Navy's trademark.

A large part of the trouble, of course, arises not from the experience of these men in the war, but from their experience immediately after it. Training schemes for those who went into executive jobs in industry just after 1945 were usually rudimentary, compared with what they are now. They were especially rudimentary for men who had come out of the services with some pretensions to senior officer (major or above) rank. The absurd truth is that, for those first few post-war years only, there was a tendency in industry not to harry them. They had won the war, and could not be expected to be taught things from scratch now. And, contrary to common myth, the promotion system in the war had generally picked out the best men for promotion to the relatively higher ranks; it is this potential that industry later often wasted. An embarrassing position has now been reached where it is often precisely this generation which is being passed over, in favour of slightly younger men, for the top posts. And often, because of their wasted immediate post-war years, quite rightly.

In the administrative civil service, there seems to me something of a similar hiatus. I am less impressed by many of those in their 40s than by the generation which is slightly older or younger. A big factor here is that the top choice of the best entrants for the British civil service just after the war was most often for the British foreign service; in 1945–49, it looked as if living outside Britain would afford one a pleasanter sort of life than living inside it. Unfortunately, the training system, once in the British foreign service, is appalling; it is similar to that in the armed services in many respects. The training system in the domestic branches of administrative civil service is very good; but it missed out during 1945–49 in attracting the cream of one half-decade's intake.

In politics, the generation of ex-officers is doing better, though chiefly on the Conservative side. Reginald Maudling, Edward Heath, and Iain Macleod make a pretty adequate intake for anybody's money. But the immediate post-war experience of each of them is interesting. Maudling and Macleod went into Conservative Central Office, planning for the future even during the late 1940s; Heath went into the administrative civil service, before resigning to become a parliamentary candidate. Each, therefore, to some extent escaped the slack training atmosphere of immediate post-war industry. Each then achieved junior ministerial or party office in the early 1950s, at the time when the dash out of the austerity, demand-inflationary, ration book, siege economy—towards the competitive and mobile economy—was being achieved. This period of escape from the ration book economy had a major effect on British industrial attitudes, but most notably in those who had not become too stuck in the old attitudes. At this stage, it is therefore convenient to turn to consider the latest generation of dynamos: those who entered on their first executive jobs in industry and public affairs at this time.

The Younger Lions

THE LATEST GENERATION of leaders or potential leaders in Britain might best be defined as those who have entered industry or public affairs since about 1951, and are therefore generally under the age of 40 (or at least not much above it) now. There are two—frankly "right wing"—reasons why this generation in industry seems to me to have started out much more hopefully than its immediate predecessors.

First, they have been accustomed from the beginning to industry which is working under conditions of market competition, although they often came into firms whose manner of operations was geared to what was suitable for a much less brisk climate. It has therefore been natural for them to feel a healthy dissatisfaction

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with some accepted ways of doing things from the start.

Secondly, the considerable rise in executive salaries since 1955—and the sharp drop in rates of surtax on their marginal incomes—has made this group much more mobile than their immediate predecessors. I am not suggesting that the cut in surtax rates has made them work harder or more keenly. But I am suggesting that it is much easier now than it was fifteen years ago to lure away an executive who is earning £3,500 a year in one firm, by an offer of £4,500 a year in another firm. And this movement from job to job—generally limited to men under the age of about 42—has been very good for efficiency.

Thirdly, the new generation is much more cosmopolitan than the old, thanks largely to the greater opportunities for travel in recent years, including travel on holiday. They are notably better at speaking more foreign languages, with slightly less execrable accents, than their elders; and are also infinitely more responsive in accepting and adopting ideas from abroad.

In British industry, the improvement in the new generation over the old seems to me to be dramatic. In the administrative grade of the civil service, it is also noticeable—except, of course, to the older generation itself. In politics, it is much less pronounced. But this is largely because of an historical accident; the last four general elections have not seen as large a turnover of seats as one should normally expect. It follows that the last really notable intake of mass new blood into any parliamentary party was the intake of M.P.s into the Conservative Party in 1950.

Having said this, there are several more disappointing points to make about the new generation of dynamos. They still come very much from one class. An extraordinarily large number of the rising men of the next decade are still the products of the public schools and the two older universities; the long-heralded grammar-school and red-brick revolution shows precious little sign of getting off the ground. Some part of this is due to nepotism, and especially to the son-in-law relationship, which is as important in modern Britain as in modern Soviet Russia. But there are other reasons, including a little-noted one: namely, the greater mobility which the boarding-school system makes possible for the young fathers of to-day's boarding-school-boys (and girls). The really successful young executive of to-day is likely to have moved jobs (and areas) three or four times before he is aged about 38. There does seem to be some psychological barrier to taking the risk of moving jobs among what might be called first-generation executives, compared with those bred to the boardroom purple. And there is an even greater barrier to risky mobility when one's children are settled in a good local state day-school, than when they have been farmed out at a prep. or public school; another aid to mobility, incidentally, is having just enough capital to put as a down-payment on a house.

The other disappointment about the otherwise promising new generation, which is probably associated with the first, is that they are radical only within fairly narrow limits. They are innovators in the sense that they often see what is being done wrong now, and what needs to be improved. They are less radical in their ideas about entirely new ventures. More of this generation are in fact daring to branch out in enterprises of their own than seemed at all likely ten years ago. But the impetus is rarely the urge to make a better mousetrap; much more often it is to buy and re-sell mousetraps in a more efficient and profitable way than the fuddy-duddies up top. One suspects that these limits to the new generation's radicalism mean that, when they reach the age of 50 in ten to fifteen years' time, they may be as conservative as the quinquagenarian generation of to-day.

MY REMARKS have been generalised. Many of their generalities will be rightly disputed, and probably wrongly resented. It is faintly ridiculous to try to give an accurate panoramic view of even one generation of the nation's leaders, let alone of four generations consecutively. But I stick to the belief that the broad generalities essayed here grasp some part of the truth. When touting on journalistic business for information among these men, I find myself unconsciously type-casting informants, according to how far they conform to or (naturally very often) depart from what I now regard as their generations' very rough norms. This type-casting might also be useful to those engaged in the tasks of managements or parliamentary candidate selection—except, unfortunately, that many of the selectors themselves are liable to be most infuriated by the very idea of it.

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MORTALITY

The first-class brains of a senior civil servant
Shiver and shatter and fall
As the steering column of his comfortable Humber
Batters in the bony wall.
All those delicate little re-adjustments
'On the one hand, if we proceed
With an *ad hoc* policy hitherto adapted
To individual need....
On the other hand, too rigid an arrangement
Might, of itself, perforce....
I would like to submit for the Minister's concurrence
The following alternative course,
Subject to revision and reconsideration
In the light our experience gains...."
And this had to happen at the corner where the by-pass
Comes into Egham out of Staines.
That very near miss for an All Souls' fellowship,
The recent compensation of a 'K'——
The first-class brains of a senior civil servant
Are sweetbread on the road to-day

J. Betjeman.

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J. G. Herder

By Isaiah Berlin

"We live in a world we ourselves create."

ACCORDING to the traditional view, Johann Gottfried Herder's fame rests on the fact that he is the father of related notions of nationalism, historicism, and the *Volksgeist*, one of the leaders of the romantic revolt against classicism, rationalism, and faith in the omnipotence of scientific method—in short, the most formidable of the adversaries of the French *philosophes* and their German disciples.

Whereas they—or at least the best known among them, d'Alembert, Helvétius, d'Holbach, and, with qualifications, Voltaire and Diderot, Wolff and Reimarus—believed that reality was ordered in terms of universal, timeless, objective, unalterable laws which rational investigation could discover, Herder maintained that every activity, situation, historical period, or civilisation possessed a unique character of its own; so that the attempt to reduce such phenomena to combinations of uniform elements, and to describe or analyse them in terms of universal rules, tended to obliterate precisely those crucial differences which constituted the specific quality of the object under study, whether in nature or in history. To the notions of universal laws, absolute principles, final truths, idealised eternal models and standards in ethics or aesthetics, physics or mathematics, he opposed a radical distinction between the methods appropriate to the study of physical nature and that called for by the changing and developing spirit of man. He is credited with having revived the notion of social patterns, social growth, the vital importance of considering qualitative as well as quantitative factors—the impalpable and the imponderable, which the concepts of natural science ignore or deny. Preoccupied with the mysteries of the creative process, whether in individuals or groups, he launched (so we are told) a general attack on rationalism with its tendency to generalise, abstract, assimilate the dissimilar, unify the disparate, and, above all, on its avowed purpose to create a corpus of systematic knowledge which in principle would be capable of answering all intelligible questions —the idea of a unified science of all there is. And in the course of this propaganda against rationalism, scientific method, and the universal authority of intelligible laws, he is held to have stimulated the growth of particularism, literary, religious, and political irrationalism, and thereby transformed human thought and action in the generation that followed.

THIS ACCOUNT, which is to be found in the best-known monographs devoted to Herder's thought, is over-simple. He was a sharp and remorseless critic of the Encyclopedists. His views did have a profound and revolutionary effect upon later thought and practice. He has been praised by some as the champion of faith against reason, poetical and historical imagination against the mechanical application of rules, insight against logic, life against death; by others he has been classed with confused, or retrograde, or irrationalist thinkers who misunderstood what they had learned from the Enlightenment, and fed the stream of German chauvinism and obscurantism; still others have sought to find common ground between him and Comte or Darwin, or Wagner or modern sociologists.

It is not my purpose in this essay to pronounce directly upon these questions, although I am inclined to think that the extent of his acquaintance and fidelity to the natural science of his day have often been underestimated: he was fascinated and influenced by the findings of the sciences no less than Goethe, and, like him, thought that false general inferences were often drawn from them. But it is not this that I propose to discuss. I wish to confine myself, so far as possible (and at times it is not) to what is original in Herder's views, and by no means to all of this: in particular I shall try to examine three cardinal ideas in the rich welter of his

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thought, ideas which have had great influence for two centuries and are novel, important, and interesting in themselves. These ideas, which go against the main stream of the thought of his time (1744–1803), I have called Populism, Expressionism, and Pluralism.[1]

I

LET ME BEGIN by conceding the most obvious of Herder's debts to other thinkers:

(*1*) Herder's thesis that the proper subject of the historical sciences is the life of communities and not the exploits of individuals—statesmen, soldiers, kings and dynasties, adventurers, and other prominent figures—had been stated by Hume and Montesquieu, by Schlözer and Gatterer, and with incomparable imagination and originality by Vico. There is, so far as I know, no conclusive evidence that Herder had read Vico's *Scienza Nuova* before his own historical views had been fully formed; but if he had not read Vico he had heard of him, and probably read Wegelin, and Cesarotti's Homeric commentaries. At any rate, the notion of cultural history was far from new in his day, as the ironical title of his early *Yet Another Philosophy of History* was meant to emphasise. The case for it had been presented effectively by his arch-enemy Voltaire in the celebrated *Essai sur les moeurs* and elsewhere.

(*2*) The notion that the variety of civilisation is, to a large degree, determined by differences of physical and geographical factors—referred to by the general name of "climate"—had become, since Montesquieu, a commonplace. It occurs, before Montesquieu, in the thought of Saint-Evremond, the Abbé du Bos, and their followers.

(*3*) The dangers of cultural arrogance—the tendency to judge ancient societies in terms of modern values—had been made a central issue by his older contemporary Lessing (even though Lessing may have been influenced by Herder). Nor had anyone written more pungently than Voltaire against the European habit of dismissing as inferior remote civilisations, such as that of China which he had extolled in order to expose the ridiculous vanity, exclusiveness, and fanaticism of the "barbarous" Judeo-Christian outlook that recognised no values beside its own. The fact that Herder turned this weapon against Voltaire himself, and accused him of a narrow *dix-huitième* and Parisian point of view, does not alter the fact that the head and source of all opposition to Europocentrism was the Patriarch himself. Voltaire had praised ancient Egypt, and Winckelmann the Greeks; Boulainvilliers had spoken of the superiority of the Northern nations, and so had Mallet in his celebrated history of Denmark; Hurd, Millar, and after them Justus Möser, sang the praises of medieval Europe at the very height of the contemptuous dismissal of the Dark Ages by Voltaire and the *Encyclopédie*. They were, it is true, a minority, and while Möser's views may have been influenced by Herder, they were not created by him.

(*4*) The dangers of taking profound differences of culture too lightly—that notorious lack of historical sense that made Racine and Corneille represent classical or exotic oriental personages in the clothes and with the manners of the courtiers of Louis XIV—had been commented on by Du Bos and successfully satirised by Saint-Evremond. At the other end of the scale, some of the German pietists (Zinzendorff and Arnold among others) had laid great stress on the proposition that every religion had a unique insight peculiar to itself and based on this belief a passionate and unpopular plea for toleration of deviation from Lutheran orthodoxy and even of heresies and unbelief.

(*5*) The notion of the spirit of a nation or a culture had been central not only to Vico and Montesquieu, but to the famous Karl Friedrich von Moser, whom Herder read and knew, to the Swiss scholars Bodmer and Breitinger, to Hamann and to Zimmermann. Bolingbroke had spoken of the division of men into nationalities as being deeply rooted in Nature herself. By the middle of the century there were plenty of Celtomaniacs and Gothomaniacs—notably Irish and Scotsmen who, even without the aid of Ossian, praised the virtues of Gaelic or Germanic tribes, and were representing them as being morally and socially superior to ancient Greeks or

[1] I shall necessarily have to omit much else that is relevant and interesting: for example, Herder's dominant influence on romanticism, vitalism, existentialism, and, above all, on social psychology, which he in effect founded; as well as the use made of his imprecise, often inconsistent, but always many-faceted and stimulating thought, by such writers as the Schlegels and Jakob Grimm (especially in their philological excursions), Savigny (who derived from him the notion of organic national growth), Görres (whose nationalism is rooted in, even if it distorts, Herder's vision), Hegel (whose concepts of becoming and of the growth and personality of impersonal institutions derived directly from Herder's pages), and the historical geographers, social anthropologists, philosophers of language and of history, and historical writers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

My principal reason for choosing the three ideas on which I intend to concentrate is that they are conceptions of the first order of originality and historical importance, the origins and properties of which have not received sufficient notice. My purpose is to do justice to Herder's originality rather than his influence.

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Romans, still more to the decadent civilisation of modern Latin and Mediterranean peoples. Rousseau's celebrated letter to the Poles, advising them to resist forcible assimilation by Russia by deliberately exaggerating their national customs and characteristics, unacceptable as this was to the cosmopolitanism of his time, exhibits the same spirit.

(*6*) The notion of society as an organism was by this time very old indeed. The use of organic metaphors is at least as old as Aristotle; nobody had used them more lavishly than medieval writers; they are the heart and centre of John of Salisbury's political tracts, and are a weapon consciously used by Hooker and Pascal against the new scientific-mechanical conceptions. There was certainly nothing novel in this notion; it represents, on the contrary, if anything, a deliberate return to older views of social life. This is no less true of Burke, who was equally prone to the use of analogies drawn from the new biological sciences; I know of no evidence that Burke had read or heard of Justus Möser's or Herder's ideas.

(*7*) Differences of ideals—of what made men happy—had been noticed by Adam Ferguson in his highly original essay on the "History of Civil Society," which Herder had read.[2]

(*8*) As for the general explanation of events in naturalistic terms, whether geophysical or biological, this was the normal approach of the followers of Locke, Helvétius, and the Encyclopedists, and indeed of the entire Enlightenment. Unlike his teacher Hamann, Herder was decisively affected by it; he gave it a vitalistic but not a mystical or theosophical interpretation favoured by Hemsterhuis, Lavater, and other "Intuitivists."

(*9*) The ancient notion of a single great cosmic force of Nature, embodied in finite, dynamic centres, had been given new life by Leibniz and was common to all his disciples.

(*10*) In the same manner the idea of a divine plan realised in human history had passed in uninterrupted succession from the Old Testament and its Jewish interpreters to the Christian Fathers and then to the classical formulation of Bossuet.

(*11*) The parallels between primitive peoples remote from one another in time and space—Homeric Greeks and early Romans on the one hand, and Red Indians or Germanic tribes on the other—had been put forward by Fontenelle and by the French Jesuit, Père Laffitteau; the protagonists of this approach in the early years of the century, especially English writers such as Blackwell and the Wartons, owed much to these forerunners. It had become part and parcel of Homeric scholarship, which flourished both in England and under the impulsion of Vico in Italy. Certainly Cesarotti had perceived the wider implications of this kind of approach to literature for comparative philology and anthropology; and when the *Encyclopédie* dismissed Homer in the course of a general article devoted to the Greeks as "a Greek philosopher, theologian, and poet," unlikely to be read much in the future, this was a characteristically partisan *boutade*, in the spirit of Descartes and Pierre Bayle, against reverence for the past and dreary scholarship. Nor was the Bible itself, which Vico had not dared to touch, left unmolested. Philological and historical criticism of the text, which had begun with Spinoza and Père Simon in the previous century, had been carried on cautiously—despite some opposition from Christian orthodoxy, both Catholic and Protestant—with strict regard to the rules of secular scholarship. Astruc in France, Lowth in England, and after them Michaelis in Germany (and Denmark), treated the Bible as a piece of oriental antiquity composed at various dates. Everyone knows of Gibbon's debt to Mosheim's coldly secular treatment of early Christian ecclesiastical history. Herder, who was in no sense a trained researcher, had plenty to lean upon.

(*12*) The same is true of Herder's linguistic patriotism. The defence of the German language had been vigorously taken up by Opitz at the turn of the 16th century, and had since then formed part of the conscious programme of theologians, men of letters, and philosophers. Menke, Horneck, Moscherosh, Logau, and Uden are names that may not mean a great deal to English students to-day; but in the two centuries that followed the Reformation they fought with stubbornness and success under Luther's banner against both Latin and French; and more famous men, Puffendorff and Leibniz, Thomasius and Wolff, Hamann and Lessing, were also engaged in the same campaign that had begun long before. Once again, Herder began with something that had by that time become established as a traditional German attitude.

(*13*) As for the famous reversal of values—the triumph of the concrete over the abstract; the sharp turn towards the immediate, the given, the experienced and away from abstractions, theories, generalisations, and stylised patterns; and above all, the restoration of quality to its old status above quantity, and of the secondary qualities of the senses to their primacy over the primary qualities of physics—it is in this cause that Hamann made his name. It formed

[2] The late Harold Laski's description of Ferguson as "a pinchbeck Montesquieu" throws light only on the quality of Mr. Laski's critical judgment, in this instance probably a mere echo of Leslie Stephen.

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the basis of Lavater's "physiognomical" researches; it was at least as old as Shaftesbury; it is pertinent to the works of the young Burke.

(*14*) The reaction against the reorganisation of knowledge and society by the application of rationalist and scientific principles was in full swing by the time Herder came upon the scene. Rousseau had struck against it in 1750 with his *First Discourse*. Seven years later his moralising and reactionary *Letter to d'Alembert* (denouncing the stage) had marked a total break with the party of the *philosophes*, as both sides swiftly recognised. In Germany this mood was strongly reinforced by the inward-looking tradition of the Pietist movement. The human solidarity and mutual respect of these small groups, inspired by their burning Protestant faith; their belief in the unadorned truth, in the power of goodness, in the inner light; their contempt for outward forms; their rigid sense of duty and discipline; their perpetual self-examination; their obsession with the presence of evil, which at times took hysterical or sadistic forms and generated a good deal of unctuous hypocrisy; and above all, their preoccupation with the life of the spirit which alone liberated men from the bonds of the flesh and of nature—all these strains are very strong in those who were brought up in this stern atmosphere, and particularly in Prussians like Hamann, Herder, and Kant. Although a great intellectual gulf divides Kant from Herder, they share a common element: a craving for spiritual self-determination as against half-conscious drifting along the streams of uncriticised dogma (whether theological or scientific), for moral independence (whether of individuals or groups) and above all for moral salvation.

IF HERDER HAD DONE no more than create a genuine synthesis out of these attitudes and doctrines, and build with them, if not a system, at any rate a coherent *Weltanschauung* destined to have a decisive influence on the literature and thought of his country, this alone would have been a high enough achievement to earn for him a unique place in the history of civilisation. Invention is not everything. If one were called upon to show what is strictly original in the individual doctrines of Locke or Rousseau, Bentham or Marx, Aquinas and even Hegel, one could, without much difficulty, trace virtually all their doctrines to antecedent "sources." Yet this does not derogate from the originality and genius of these thinkers. "Small change for a *Napoléon d'or* is not a Napoleon."

It is not, however, my purpose to evaluate the work of Herder as a whole, but only to consider certain authentically *sui generis* doctrines which he launched; to discuss them not only for the sake of historical justice, but also as views that are peculiarly relevant and interesting in our own times. Herder's final claim need not rest upon what was, if I am right, most original in his thought. For his vast general influence has sometimes, paradoxically, served to overshadow that which he, virtually alone, launched upon the world.

II

LET ME RETURN to the three topics of this study, namely:

1. *Populism*: the belief in the value of belonging to a group or a culture, which for Herder at least, is not political, and is indeed, to some degree, anti-political; it is therefore different from and even opposed to nationalism.

2. *Expressionism*: The doctrine that human activity in general, and art in particular, express the entire personality of the individual or the group, and are intelligible only to the degree to which they do so. Still more specifically, expressionism[3] claims that all the works of men are above all voices speaking, are not objects detached from their makers, are part of a living process of communication between persons, and not independently existing entities, beautiful or ugly, interesting or boring, upon which external observers may direct the cool and dispassionate gaze which scientists—or anyone not given to pantheism or mysticism—direct upon objects in nature. This is connected with the further notions that all forms of human self-expression are in some sense artistic, and that self-expression is part of the essence of human beings as such; which in turn entail such distinctions as those between integral and divided or committed and uncommitted (that is, unfulfilled) lives; and thence lead to the concept of various hindrances, human and non-human, to the self-realisation, the richest and most harmonious forms of self-expression, that all creatures, whether or not they are aware of it, live for.

3. *Pluralism*: the belief not merely in the multiplicity but in the incommensurability of the values of different cultures and societies and, in addition, the incompatibility of equally valid ideals; together with the implied revolutionary corollary that the classical notions of an ideal man and of an ideal society are intrinsically incoherent and meaningless.

EACH OF THESE THREE THESES is relatively novel. All are incompatible with the central moral,

[3] I use this term in its wider, most generic sense, with no specific reference to the Expressionist painters, writers and composers of the early decades of the twentieth century.

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historical, and aesthetic doctrines of the Enlightenment. They are not independent of each other; everything in the illimitable, varied, and exceedingly rich panorama which Herder's works present is woven. Indeed the notion of unity in difference, still more that of differences in unity, the tension of the One and the Many, is his obsessive *idée maîtresse*. Hence the recurrence through all his discussions of a constant theme: the "organic" oneness of each personality with the form of life that it leads, the empirical and metaphysical unity of the physical and the mental, of intellect, will, and emotion—distinctions and classifications that he regarded as, at best, superficial, at worst as profoundly misleading; hence the stress on the oneness of thought and feeling, of theory and practice, of the public and the private, or, in other words, on the heroic effort to conceive the universe as a single process.

The celebrated words with which he opens his most famous and ambitious work, *Ideas towards a Philosophy of History*—"the earth is a star among stars"—are very characteristic. There follow chapters on geology, climate, mineral, vegetable and animal life, and lessons in physical geography, until, at last, early man is reached; there is a corresponding attempt to link all the arts and all the sciences, to represent religions, artistic, social, political, economical, biological, philosophical experiences as facets of one activity. And since the pattern is one, fact and value are not divided (*pace* Hume and Kant, with whose works Herder was only too familiar). To understand a thing was, for him, to see how it could be viewed as it was viewed, assessed as it was assessed, valued as it was valued, in a given context, by a particular culture or tradition. To grasp what a belief, a piece of ritual, a myth, a poem, or a linguistic usage meant to a Homeric Greek, a Livonian peasant, an ancient Hebrew, an American Indian, that is, what part it played in his life, was for Herder to be able not merely to give a scientific or common-sense explanation but to give a reason or justification of the activity in question, or at least to go a long way towards this. For to explain human experiences or attitudes is to be able to transpose oneself by sympathetic imagination into the situation of the human beings who are to be "explained"; and this amounts to understanding and communicating the coherence of a particular way of life, feeling, action: and thereby the validity of the given act or action, the part it plays in the life and outlook which is "natural" in the situation. Explanation and justification, references to causes and purposes, to the visible and to the invisible, statements of fact and their assessment in terms of the historical standards of value relevant to them, melt into one another and seem to Herder to be a single type, and not several types of thinking.

Herder is one of the originators of the secular doctrine of the unity of fact and value, theory and practice, "is" and "ought," intellectual judgment and emotional commitment, thought and action.

THE SHARPEST CRITICS of Herder have always conceded the power and breadth of his imagination. He did have an astonishing capacity for conceiving a great variety of actual and possible societies in the past and the present and an unexampled warmth of sympathy for them all. He was inspired by the possibility of reconstructing forms of life as such, and he delighted in bringing out their individual shape, the fullness of human experience embodied in them; the odder, the more extraordinary a culture or an individual, the better pleased he was. He can hardly condemn anything that displays colour or uniqueness; Indians, Americans, Persians, Greece and Palestine, Arminius and Machiavelli, Shakespeare and Savonarola, seem to him equally fascinating. He deeply hates the forces that make for uniformity. Or the assimilation of one culture or way of life to another, whether in life or in the books of historians. He conscientiously looks for uniformities, but what fascinates him is the exception. He condemns the erection of walls between one genus and another; but he seeks for the greatest possible number of distinctions of species within a genus, and of individuals within the species.

Hamann had preached to him the need to preserve sensitiveness to specific historical and cultural phenomena, to avoid becoming deadened by the passion for classification and generalisation demanded by networks of tidy concepts, a fatal tendency which he attributed to the natural sciences and to their slaves, the Frenchmen who wished to transform everything by the application of scientific method. Like Hamann, Herder preserved his childlike impressionability—his capacity to react spontaneously to the jagged, irregular, not always describable data provided by the senses, by imagination, by religious revelation, by history, by art. He did not hasten to refer them to their appropriate cases in the museum of concepts; he was penetrated through and through by the spirit of empiricism, of the sacredness of facts. Not so much as Hamann, but more than even Lessing and Diderot, and incomparably more than such official materialists and "sensualists" as Condillac or Helvétius, Herder avoided the temptation to reduce the heterogeneous flow of experience to homogeneous units, to label them and fit them into theoretical frameworks in order to be able to predict and control them.

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The notorious luxuriance and formlessness of his ideas is due at least as much to his sense of the complexity of the facts themselves as to a naturally rhapsodical and turbid mind. As a writer he is exuberant and disordered, but not obscure or vague. Even at his most rapt he is not somnambulist or self-intoxicated; he does not, even in his most lyrical moments, fly from the facts to an ideal heaven above, like the German metaphysical poets of his time, Gleim or Uz or Klopstock or even Goethe on occasions. Great scientists and philosophers have often made their impact by violently exaggerating their original insights. But Herder cannot let go of what he sees, feels, hears, learns. His sense of the texture of reality is concrete while his analytical powers are feeble.

The three original theses which form the subject of this study display this and have consequently often been a source of irritation to tidier, clearer, logically more gifted thinkers.

III

LET ME BEGIN with Herder's Populism, or the idea of what it is to belong to a group.

Everyone seems agreed that Herder began as a typical, almost routine defender of the great ideals of eighteenth-century enlightenment, that is, as a humanitarian, a cosmopolitan, and a pacifist. Later, so it sometimes seems to be assumed, he gradually evolved towards more reactionary views: the abandonment of reason and intellect, intuitionism, nationalism, Gallophobia, faith and belief in tradition.

Was this, after all, not the evolution in some degree of other thinkers of his and the succeeding generation in Germany? Almost without exception, they began by welcoming the French Revolution rapturously, planting trees of liberty and denouncing as absolute and brutally oppressive the rule of the three hundred German princes, until, horrified by the Terror and wounded by the military humiliation of Germany before the armies of Revolutionary France and still more, those of Napoleon, they turned into patriots, reactionaries, and romantic irrationalists. Was not this the path pursued by Fichte (above all Fichte), Görres, Novalis and the Schlegels, Schleiermacher and Tieck, Gentz and Schelling, and to some degree even by Hegel and Schiller? Were not Goethe and Humboldt (and Georg Forster, though he died before the reaction set in) almost alone in their unswerving fidelity to reason, toleration, and the unity of mankind, and in their loathing of nationalism and all forms of collective emotional afflatus? Is it not reasonable to assume that this process of retreat from reason took place in Herder too? True, he died before the most crushing defeats had been inflicted by Napoleon on the German armies and princes; yet was it not the case that Herder began as a cosmopolitan and ended as a nationalist? Here too, so it would seem, wounded national pride, and perhaps age and the cooling of youthful utopianism, had had their inescapable effect.

Yet this view seems to me untenable. Whatever may have been the evolution of Fichte or Friedrich Schlegel, Herder's form of nationalism remained unaltered throughout his life. His national feeling was not political and never became so, nor yet did he abandon or modify the peculiar brand of universalism with which he had begun, whether or not the two tendencies were consistent (the least of his concerns) throughout his long and voluminous intellectual activity.

As early as 1765, in an address composed in Riga (where at the age of twenty-one he occupied the post of a Lutheran preacher in that officially Russian city), in answer to the question *"Have we still a republic and a fatherland like the Ancients?"* Herder declared that this was no longer the case. In Greece, the strength and the glory of the *polis* were the supreme goals of all free men. Religion, morals, tradition, every aspect of human activity stemmed from and were directed to maintaining the City, and any danger to it was a danger to all that these men were, and lived by; if it fell, everything fell with it. But then, he went on to say, Christianity came and the horizons of mankind became immeasurably wider. Christianity, he explained, is a universal religion: it embraces all men and all peoples; it transcends all local and temporary loyalties in the worship of what is universal and eternal.

THIS THESIS was highly characteristic of the Christian humanism of the German *Aufklärung*, and, despite all that has been said to the contrary, Herder never abandoned this point of view. His central belief was expressed towards the end of his life in words similar to those of his early writings:

> To brag of one's country is the stupidest form of boastfulness. A nation is a wild garden full of bad plants and good, vices and follies mingle with virtues and merit. What Don Quixote will break a lance for this Dulcinea?

Patriotism was one thing, nationalism another: "An innocent attachment to family, language, one's own city, one's own country, its traditions, is not to be condemned." But he goes on to say that "aggressive nationalism" is detestable in all its manifestations, and wars are mere crimes. This is so because "all large wars are

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essentially civil wars, since men are brothers, and wars are a form of abominable fratricide." A year later he adds: "We must have nobler heroes than Achilles, loftier patriots than Horatius Cocles." And many years later, in 1794, he repeats this: "One fatherland ranged against another in bloody battle is the worst barbarism in the human vocabulary."

These views can scarcely be due merely to the fact, by which they are sometimes explained, that political nationalism would have been too unrealistic an outlook in a feeble and divided country governed by several hundred hereditary despots; so that even to look for it there demonstrates a lack of historical sense. For the Italians, who were no less divided and politically impotent, had developed a distinct craving for political unification which dated back at least to Machiavelli, even though the prevailing social and political conditions in Italy were not so very unlike those of 18th-century Germany.

Herder's attitude is clearly the normal enlightened attitude of his time; the point, however, is that he did not abandon it. He believed in kinship, social solidarity, *Volkstum*, nationhood, but to the end of his life he detested and denounced every form of centralisation, coercion, and conquest, which were embodied and symbolised, both for him and for his teacher Hamann, in the state. Nature creates nations, not states. "The State is an instrument of happiness for a group," not for men as such. There is nothing against which he thunders more eloquently than imperialism—the crushing of one community by another, the elimination of local culture trampled under the jackboot of some conqueror. He vies with Justus Möser in his tenderness towards long-lived traditions and institutions embodied in particular forms of life that have created unity and continuity in a human community. He cares nothing for *virtù* in the Renaissance sense of the term. Alexander the Great is not a hero for him. The basis of the state is conquest, the history of states is the history of violence, a bloodstained story of aggression. The state is Ixion's Wheel and calls for meaningless self-immolation.

> Why should hundreds suffer hunger and cold to satisfy the whim of a crowned madman or the dreams bred by the fancy of a *philosophe*?

This may be directed specifically at Frederick the Great and his French advisers, but the import of it is universal. All rule of men over fellow-men is unnatural. True human relations are those of father and son, husband and wife, sons, brothers, friends, men; these terms express natural relations which make people happy. All that the state has given us is contradictions and conquests and, perhaps worst of all, dehumanisation ("What pleasure is there in being a blind cog in a machine?"). God had divided the world by mountains and oceans in order to prevent some fearful Nimrod from conquering the whole.

The *Ideas* anticipates socialist historians in representing the history of conquerors as the history of man-hunters. Despite his vow to look with a sympathetic, or at least impartial, eye upon all cultures and all nations, he cannot bring himself to forgive Rome for crushing the cultures of the peoples it has conquered, not even that of Carthage. There may be merit in efficiency and unity, but it is for him more than offset by the tragedy of the destruction; that is, by the evil of the barbarous disregard of so many spontaneous, natural forms of human self-expression: "Whom nature separated by language, customs, character, let no man artificially join together by chemistry." This is what the Romans tried to do and how the whole Roman Empire was held together. And its "Holy" successor was no better, but was rather an unnatural monster—an absurd clamping together of disparate cultures—"a lion's head with a dragon's tail, an eagle's wing, a bear's paw [glued together] in one unpatriotic symbol of a state." The Jews, turned into "parasitic money-lenders" by oppression, were at least not self-worshippers; and they are praised for not having made Palestine the source and centre of the world, for not having idealised their ancestors, and for not deriving their genealogy from gods and demigods (it is this last that has enabled them to survive the Diaspora).

Empires, especially multi-national ones ("a wild mingling of various tribes and peoples under one sceptre") rest on force; they have feet of clay and must collapse. Theocracies that are founded upon some non-political principle, a spiritual or religious force—China or Egypt, for example, to take only non-Christian faiths—have proved correspondingly more durable. The sword of the spirit is better than mere brute force: not even the acutest poverty, the deepest squalor, still less ambition and love of power, entitle men to have recourse to violence. Like Möser, Herder laments the fact that the Germans are poor, hungry, and despised; that Luther's widow had to beg for help from the King of Denmark; that Kepler died of hunger; that men of German speech have been scattered and exiled to England, Russia, and Transylvania; that gifted artists and inventors are compelled to leave their country and lavish their gifts upon foreigners; that Hessians are sold and bought like "Negro slaves" while their families starve and perish. Nevertheless, conquest is not the answer. The German mission is to be a nation of thinkers and educators. This is their

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true glory.[4] Sacrifice—self-sacrifice, not the domination of one man over another, is the proper end of man.

HERDER sets his face against everything that is predatory, against the use of force in any cause but that of self-defence. The Crusades, no matter how Christian in inspiration, are hateful to him, since they conquered and crushed other human communities. Yet consent for him is a false basis of society, for consent is ultimately a form of yielding, however rational or voluntary, to strength, whereas human relations must rest upon respect, affection, kinship, equality, not fear or prudence and utilitarian calculation. It is when religions forget the ends of man and turn into empty, mechanical cults, that they develop into a source of unintelligible mystification and their ceremonies decay into a recital of dead formulae, while the priests, who no longer understand their own faith, become instruments of other forces—in particular of the state and the men who control it. For him, as for Nietzsche, the state is the coldest of all cold monsters. Nothing in the whole of human history is more hateful to him than the churches and priests who are the instruments of political power; of these he speaks with the same voice as Voltaire or d'Holbach; while "the State" (he says in words that could have been Rousseau's) "robs men of what is most important—themselves." The state becomes a drug with the help of which men seek to forget themselves, a self-generated method of escaping from the need to live, create, and choose. Furthermore the sheer exercise of bureaucratic activity is a form of self-intoxication, and he speaks of it as a kind of opium by which men are transformed into mechanical functionaries. Profound differences, both personal and literary, came to divide Herder from Goethe and Schiller, but when in their jointly written *Xenien* they say

Deutschland? aber wo liegt's, Ich weiss das Land nicht zu finden.
Wo das Gelehrte beginnt, hort das Politische auf.
("*Das Deutsche Reich*")

or

Zur Nation euch zu bilden, Ihr hoffet es, Deutsche vergebens;
Bildet, Ihr Könnt es, dafür, freier zu Menschen euch aus,
("*Deutscher Nationalcharakter*")

they speak for Herder too. The state is the substitution of machinery for life—a prospect and a reality that frightened him no less than it did Rousseau.

WHAT, THEN, IS the right life for men?

They should live in natural units, that is in societies united by a common culture. Nature creates nations, not states, and does not make some nations intrinsically superior to others. There is no *Favoritvolk*. A nation is made what it is by "climate," education, relations with its neighbours, and other changeable and empirical factors, and not by an impalpable inner essence or an unalterable factor such as race or colour.

All this, said late in his life, is the pure milk of the doctrine of the Enlightenment. Herder protests, not without a certain malicious satisfaction (as Hamann also did, with equally ironical pleasure) that the great liberal Kant in his *Anthropologie* emphasised race and colour too much. He is equally indignant about Kant's proposition that men need a master; he replies that "animals need a master, not men"; and he denounces Kant's philosophy of history, according to which it is the vices of mankind—desire for power and mastery over the scarce resources of the earth—that stimulate competition, struggle, and thereby progress, with the corollary that the sufferings of the individual are indispensable to the improvement of the species (a doctrine that was destined to reach its richest development in Hegel, and in another form in Spencer's evolutionary doctrine and the vagaries of social Darwinism). Herder repudiates these doctrines in the pure spirit of liberal, individualist, Weimar cosmopolitanism. Indeed, the perception that cruel and sinister implications are contained in any doctrine that preaches the sacrifice of individuals on the altar of vast abstractions—the human species, society, civilisation, progress (later thinkers were to say, race, state, class, and a chosen *élite*)—has its true beginnings here. Kant's unconcealed lack of sympathy for Herder's sweeping and imprecise generalisations, and his complaints that these were never supported either by adequate evidence or rigorous argument, may in part account for Herder's deliberate choice of the famous champion of the inexorable voice of duty, the moral equality of men and the infinite value of the individual, as the butt of his own passionate anti-racialism and anti-imperialism and of his defence of the right of all men and nations to develop along their own self-chosen lines.

Variety does not entail, for Herder, conflict. He does not see why one community absorbed in the development of its own native talent should not respect a similar activity on the part

[4] The most eloquent statement of Herder's conception of the Germans' earthly miseries and spiritual task is to be found in his epistle in verse, *German National Glory*, written in 1792, but published posthumously in 1812, when the mood of many of his countrymen, whipped into a frenzy of nationalism by Jahn, Arndt, Körner, and Görres was wholly different.

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of others. The Kant of the *Grundlegung* or of *Zum ewigen Frieden* might have agreed; but the Kant of the *Anthropologie* and the other essays on universal history did not. Kant's reputed consistency is evidently largely mythical.

IV

WHAT DETERMINES the units in which it is "natural" for men to live?

Herder implicitly rejects Aristotle's (and Rousseau's) doctrine that a "natural" or satisfactory human society is constituted only of small human groups in which men can know each other face to face, and where (in Aristotle's phrase) one herald can be heard by all. Societies are created by climate, geography, physical and biological needs, and similar factors; they are made one by common traditions and common memories, of which the principal link and vehicle—indeed, more than vehicle, the very incarnation—is language.

> Has a nation anything more precious than the language of its fathers? In it dwell its entire world of tradition, history, religion, principles of existence; its whole heart and soul.

It is so because men necessarily think in symbols, since to think is to use symbols; and their feelings and attitudes of life are incorporated in symbolic forms—worship, poetry, ritual. This is so whether what they seek are pleasures or necessities—the dance, the hunt, primitive forms of social solidarity expressed and preserved by myth and formalised representation—in fact, the entire network of belief and behaviour that binds men to one another can be explained only in terms of common, public symbolism, in particular by language.

Herder had derived from Hamann his notion that words and ideas are one. Men do not think, as it were, in thoughts and ideas and then look for words in which to "clothe" them, as one looks for a glove to fit a fully-formed hand. Hamann taught that to think was to use symbols and that to deny this was not so much false as unintelligible, because without symbolism one was led fallaciously to divide the aspects of a single experience into separate entities—the fatal doctrine of Descartes, who spoke of mind and body, thought and its object, matter and mind, as though they were independent existents. Such distinction as we draw between thought and feeling (and their "objects"), physical sensation and intellectual or moral or aesthetic awareness are, according to Hamann (where one can understand him), an attempt to draw attention now to this, now that facet of a single experience; a tendency which, pushed too far, tends to separate and abstract one facet from another, and, pushed further still, to invent imaginary abstract objects—or idealised entities (*entia rationis*)—to transform reality into a collection of artificial figments. This springs from a craving for tidy classification, but it distorts the facts, congeals the continuous flow of the living sense of Nature and of God into dead fragments, and kills the sources of the true sense of reality—the imagination, the sense of divine revelation, which men, unspoiled by the logic and metaphysics of rationalism, always have.

Hamann was a Christian touched by mysticism: he looked upon the world, upon nature and history, as the speech of God to man; God's words were hieroglyphs, often tormentingly dark, or they were allegories, or they were symbols which opened doors to the vision of the truth which, if only men saw and heard aright, answered the questions of their heads and hearts. Hamann was not himself a visionary. He had no special revelation; but when, in the midst of an acute spiritual crisis, he turned to the Bible, he was overwhelmed by the realisation that the history of the Jews embodied a universal trans-historical truth; for it symbolised his own—and every man's—painful quest for God. Men were made in God's image, but as Hamann's Pietist ancestors had taught, man was sinful and weak, he stumbled and fell and rose again as he sought to hear the voice of his father and master, the Christ within and without him, who alone could make him whole. Man was healed only by surrendering himself to the unity of life, by allowing his entire being—spirit and flesh, mind, will, and above all, senses—to take in that which God was saying to him directly and also signified by means of the working of Nature and by the very pattern of human history. Nature and history were symbols—cryptograms—of the Logos, for those who were not perverted by metaphysical subtleties, to read. Sin was denial of divine grace and of what God had given man: passions, desires, love, a sense of joy in every manifestation of life, of sensuous nature, of creation and procreation in every form. Hume was right; no facts or events can be demonstrated to exist by reason. Yet we accept them because we cannot help it, because it is animal faith in the external world which alone makes it possible for us to think or act at all. God, the world of the senses, the meanings of words—all were directly given and intimately present to any man if only he would let himself see, hear, be.

HERDER REMAINED FREE from mysticism. It was Hamann's rejection of rationalist analysis, and his unabashed sensualism and empiricism as well as his simple Christian faith, that influenced Herder, and not the

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peculiar mystical nominalism which led Hamann to seek to understand God's hidden purpose in the occult significances of the individual Hebrew or Greek words of Holy Writ. Hamann's doctrine of language—that language alone was the central organ of all understanding and all purposive action, that men's fundamental activity was to speak to others (to men or God or themselves), and that only through language could individuals, or groups, and the meanings that they embodied in poetry or ritual, or in the network of human institutions and ways of life, be understood—this great revelation became an article of faith for Herder. To understand men was to understand what they meant, intended, or wished to communicate. Creation is communication.

During the great debate in the eighteenth century about the origins of human speech, he acquired a European reputation by saying that language was neither a sudden gift of God (as Süssmilch and other orthodox Christian writers maintained), nor a deliberate invention of particular men at a specific moment of time, like the wheel or the compass, a tool for the improvement of life (as the French scientists—Maupertuis and Condillac—came near to saying and Monboddo explicitly maintained). Language was a natural growth, no more and no less mysterious than any other form of natural development, which, if one believed in a creative God, was divine, inasmuch as God had given man a nature capable of generating symbols, the power of communication, and intentionality.

At other times—recalled, perhaps by Hamann, to his beliefs as a Lutheran clergyman, indeed as the clerical head of the Grand Duchy in Weimar—Herder recanted and conceded that language was indeed planted in, or taught to, man by God, by a specific creative act. But he could not rest in this belief. How could creatures not spiritually developed enough to use language come suddenly to be capable of doing so? And what is it to be spiritually developed, if not to be capable of thought (*i.e.*, the use of symbols, whether images or gestures or words)?

Defying the strict Lutherans, towards the end of his life, Herder returned openly to the belief that language was an intrinsic part of the natural process of the growth of consciousness, indeed, of human solidarity, which rests on the communication between men; for to be fully human is to think, and to think is to communicate; society and man are equally inconceivable without one another. Hence, "mere intelligence without the expression of language is on earth a mere Utopia." Herder means that it is inconceivable rather than improbable. Words, by connecting passions with things, the present with the past, and by making possible memory and imagination, create family, society, literature, history. He declares that to speak and think in words is to "swim in an inherited stream of images and words; we must accept these media on trust: we cannot create them." The notion of a wholly solitary—not an artificially self-isolated—man is to him as unintelligible as to Aristotle or to some linguistic philosophers of our own time. Mere contemplation yields no truth; it is only life, that is, action with or against others, that does so. For Herder man is shaped by, and must be defined in terms of, his association with others. We can purify and reform a language, but we cannot create one out of nothing; for to create a language is to think, and to think is to use language. This circle cannot be broken. The relation of particular words or groups of words to specific things is not logically or metaphysically necessary, but causal or conventional. Particular words are used in communicating particular experiences, either as a result of natural influences—environmental factors—collectively called "climate," after Montesquieu; or of psychological ones; or of mere chance; or of the decisions of human beings who, acquiring some terms by natural means (in some preconscious state) invent others as they please, arbitrarily. That is why the doctrine of real essences—the Wolffian plan of discovering the truth by the analysis of concepts—is a chimera. We have no insight into "essences." Locke was right; only experience can tell us if the expression *X* in a particular text means the same as the expression *Y*. The dogmatic certainty of fanatical sectarians about what this or that sacred writing must mean, is therefore irrational and groundless. Knowledge of philology—the historical development of languages—alone yields the story of changing uses and meanings.

Herder is anti-mechanistic; but he is an empiricist in direct descent from the English naturalists. Only assiduous historical research, sympathetic insight into the purpose of the speaker, a grasp of the machinery of communication whereby human beings understand each other, whether directly or across the centuries, can bridge the chasms between different, yet never wholly divorced, civilisations. "Language expresses the collective experience of the group."

> Has a nation anything more precious? From a study of native literatures we have learned to know ages and peoples more deeply than along the sad and frustrating path of political and military history. In the latter we seldom see more than the manner in which a people was ruled, how it let itself be slaughtered; in the former we learn how it thought, what it wished and craved for, how it took its pleasures, how it was led by its teachers or its inclinations.

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Hence Herder's stress on the importance of genetic studies and the history of language, and hence, too, the great impulsion that he gave to studies of comparative linguistics, comparative anthropology and ethnology, and above all to the great philological movement that became the pride of German scholarship towards the end of his life and in the century that followed. His own efforts in this direction were no less suggestive or speculative than those of Vico. After declaring, in language borrowed from Lavater, that "the physiognomy of language is all-important," he insisted, for example, that the languages which preserved genders (*e.g.*, Russian, with which he came into contact during his Riga years) implied a vision of a world different from the world of those whose languages are "sexless"; so, too, did particular uses of pronouns. He insisted that verbs—connected with action—came before nouns connected with contemplative objects; that active nations employ different linguistic modes from passive ones; that the nuances of language are pointers to differing forms of experience (*Weltanschauungen*). Logic for him is only an abstraction from languages living or dead. There is no logical structure "presupposed" *a priori* by all forms of rational thought; in his *Sprachphilosophie*, logic is an approximation, however useful and stable, to what is common in the structure of isomorphic languages, which themselves point to a high degree of similarity in the experiences of their users.

Anthropology, not metaphysics or logic, whether Aristotelian or Leibnizian or Kantian, is for Herder the key to the understanding of human beings and of their world. It is the history of language that most clearly and continuously reveals such phenomena as social growth—the cycles of infancy, youth, maturity, decay—that are common to individuals and nations. The relation of language to thought, although in a sense they are one, is an ambivalent one. At any rate, the art of writing, the incorporation of thought in permanent forms, while it creates the possibility of a continuity of social self-awareness, and makes accessible his own and other words to an individual, also arrests and kills. What has been put down in writing is incapable of that living process of constant adaptation and change, of the constant expression of the unanalysable and unseizable flow of actual experience, which language, if it is to communicate fully, must possess. Language alone makes experience possible, but it also freezes it. Hamann spoke of the valley of dry bones which only "a prophet" (that is, Socrates, St. Paul, Luther, and perhaps himself) could cover with flesh. Herder speaks of corpses—forms of linguistic petrification—against which, in due course, men revolt. The history of linguistic revolutions is the history of the succession of cultures, the true revolutions in the history of the human race.

Was there once a language common to all men? He does not wish to assert this. On the one hand, he clings to the notion of one world, one basic human personality, the "organic" inter-relation of everything; he insists on the folly and danger of abstraction, of fragmentation, of splitting the human personality into separate faculties, as not only Wolff but Kant, too, had done in their psychologies and in their strict division of body from soul, nature from spirit, the empirical from the *a priori*, the historical from the eternal. Yet he is a Christian, too, and he is committed to the doctrine of natural kinds. Man is unique; Lord Monboddo and the naturalists must be mistaken. That, no doubt, is why language had to be a direct gift of God, and not the product of a gradual process of emergence of rational beings out of some pre-rational state of nature—from the animal kingdom and subhuman forms of sentience, or even from insentience.[5]

The contradiction is never reconciled. The only identification that Herder never abandons is that of thought and action, language and activity. Poetry, particularly early epic poetry, is for him pure activity. He was taken in by Ossian, like many of his contemporaries. It is probably from these poems rather than from Homer—although he speaks of the Homeric poems as improvisations, not a "dead artefact"—that he derives his notion of poetry as activity. Poetry, particularly among early peoples, is, he maintains, magical in character; it is not cool description of nature or of anything else; it is a spur to action—to heroes, hunters, lovers; it stimulates and directs. It is not to be savoured by the scholar in his armchair, but is intelligible only to those who have placed themselves in situations similar to the conditions in which such words sprang into existence. During his voyage from Riga to Nantes, he observed the sailors during rough seas. These dour men under a savage discipline who lived in terror of, and in constant intimate contact with, the elements which they sought to dominate, resurrected for him the dark world of Skalds and Vikings and the Eddas, a world scarcely open to tranquil philologists in their studies, or to detached literary epicureans who turn over the pages idly, without the power to re-create the world of which these works are the vision and

[5] Mr. G. A. Wells in his *Herder and After* (The Hague, 1959) advances this view, which seems to me very illuminating.

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the voice. Words, rhythms, actions are aspects of a single experience.

These are commonplaces to-day, but (despite Vico) they were far from being such in Herder's time.

ALL AUTHENTIC EXPRESSIONS of experience are valid. They differ because lives differ: perhaps because the earth's axis is inclined by twenty-four degrees. This generates different geophysical "climates," different experiences, different societies. Anything that seems to Herder authentic delights him. He has his preferences: he prefers the Greeks, the Germans, and the Hebrews, to the Romans, the ancient Egyptians, or the Frenchmen of his own time or of the previous century. But, at least in theory, he is prepared to defend them all and to penetrate—"feel himself" (*Einfühlen* is his invention)—into their essence, grasp what it must be like to live, contemplate goals, act and react, think, imagine, in the unique ways dictated by their circumstances, and so grasp the pattern of life in terms of which alone such groups are to be defined. The central concept here is that of natural growth. Everything that is natural is valuable.

The notion (for example, the Marquis de Sade's) that vices or decadence or aggression are as natural as the rich and harmonious development of all human potentialities, is not allowed for. In this respect Herder is a true child of the Enlightenment at its most naïve as well as at its most imaginative and penetrating. The late Professor Arthur Lovejoy was surely right when he included Herder among the thinkers (perhaps the majority in the West) who identified the "must" of natural laws that caused things to be as they are and governed the world inexorably, with the "ought" of the normative rules, derived, apparently, from the self-same nature, obedience to which alone conducts men toward happiness and virtue and wisdom.

But this consensus has its limits. Herder sharply differs from the central thought of the French Enlightenment and that not only in the respects that all his commentators have noted. What is usually stressed is, in the first place, his relativism, his admiration of every authentic culture for being what it is, his insistence that outlooks and civilisations must be understood from within, in terms of their own stages of development, purposes, and outlooks; and in the second place his sharp repudiation of that central strain in Cartesian rationalism which regards only what is universal, eternal, unalterable, governed by rigorously logical relationships—only the subject matter of mathematics, logic, physics and the other natural sciences—as true knowledge.

But Herder rebelled against the *Aufklärung* in an even profounder way, by rejecting the very notion of impassable barriers in nature or experience—barriers between types of consciousness or faculties or ideas or natural objects. What repels him equally in such deeply disparate thinkers as Descartes and Kant and the French *philosophes* is their common insistence on rigid divisions between "faculties" and types of experience which they seem to him to have introduced merely to make it possible to classify and generalise. He admires Leibniz more than Kant; he recognises the logical gulf between mathematical truths and those of fact, but he regards the former (probably following Hume) as tautologies, statements unconcerned with nature. He is a thoroughgoing empiricist in matters of epistemology. Kant's transcendental categories, which claim to determine experience *a priori*, seem to him a monstrous conflation of analytic and synthetic: he rejects the "synthetic *a priori*" as a hideous confusion. Reality for him admits of no *a priori* laws; Kant's attempt to distinguish contingent from necessary judgments about experience, seems to him to be far more misleading than the distinction between intuited necessities and observed contingencies out of which Spinoza and Leibniz built their systems.

Walls erected between kinds of truth about the nature of reality—like rigid distinctions drawn between words and concepts—distort judgment not only in epistemology and logic, but in politics and ethics, the arts, and indeed all regions of experience. All activities, he insists, express the whole and undivided man whom Descartes and Kant, in their several ways, have done their best to carve up into compartments—denominated faculties—such as "reason," "imagination," "intuition," "feeling," "will."

THE ATTACK ON KANT in the *Metakritik* of 1799 merely summarises a lifelong attitude. The black-and-white terms these neo-scholastics use to describe man—an inexhaustibly complex organisation—seem to Herder wilfully absolute and arbitrary. Instead, for example, of asking themselves how free men are, free from or for what, and where and when, and in what respects, or what renders them more or less free, these thinkers dogmatically pronounce man to be free, wholly free in some absolute sense, as against animals who are wholly mechanical, or at least wholly lack freedom. They speak of man as distinguished by his possession of reason (not as being more or less rational), and define him in terms of selected properties that one must either possess wholly or not possess at all; they describe him in terms of sharp, artificial dichoto-

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mies that arbitrarily break up the interwoven, continuous, at times irregular, fluid, shapeless, often unanalysable but always perceptible, dynamic, teeming and boundless, eternal multiplicity of nature; and so provide distorting lenses both to philosophers and historians. Attempts to bring manifestations so complex and so various under some general law, whether by philosophers seeking knowledge or by statesmen seeking to organise and govern, seemed to Herder no better than a search for the lowest common denominator—for what is least characteristic and important in the lives of men —and, therefore, as leading to shallowness in theory and to a tendency to impose a crippling uniformity in practice.

All regionalists, all defenders of the local against the universal, all champions of deeply rooted forms of life, both reactionary and progressive, both genuine humanists and obscurantist opponents of scientific advance, owe something, whether they know it or not, to the doctrines that Herder, with a far wider and more magnificent sweep than Möser or Burke or Ferguson, introduced into European thought. Vico might have achieved something of this. But he was (and is) not read; as Savigny remarked, he came into his own too late to have a decisive influence.

HOWEVER much lip service Herder may have paid to "natural kinds," in general he conceived of nature as a unity in which the *Kräfte* —the mysterious, dynamic, purpose-seeking forces, the interplay of which constitutes all movement and growth—flow into each other, clash, combine, coalesce. These forces are not causal and mechanical as in Descartes; nor insulated from each other as in the Monadology of Leibniz. For Herder reality is a kind of symbiosis of these *Kräfte* (whose character remains obscure) with an environment that is conceived in somewhat static terms; if the environment is altered too abruptly, the result is some kind of collapse.

Herder found more and more evidence of this. Transplanted flowers decay in unsympathetic climates; so do human beings. Greenlanders do not thrive in Denmark. Africans are miserable and decay in Europe. Europeans become debilitated in America. Conquest crushes, and emigration sometimes leads to enfeeblement—lack of vital force—the flattening out of human beings, and a sad uniformity. The *Ideas* is full of such examples. Like Fourier after him, Herder believed in the complete realisability of all potentialities ("All that can be, will come into being"), since everything fits somewhere. Only artificiality is destructive, in life as in art. Marriages of convenience, coldly entered into, ruin children, and are worse for them than pure animality. The patriarchs at times exercised severe and cruel authority: but at least this is more "natural"—and therefore less harmful—than the artificial reasonings of philosophers.

Herder harbours a Rousseau-like suspicion of "reasoning." He does not think that Voltaire's desiccated maxims or Wolff's syllogisms are better for children than the stern but natural behaviour of primitive men. Anything is better than that which imposed the ideal of one culture on another and which arranges, adjusts, makes for uniform "physiognomies," as opposed to that which is "natural," in a state of "creative disorder," the sole state where individuality lives and grows. Hence his condemnation of all theories which over-categorise men—into racial types, for example—and thereby divide them from each other. He condemns the anthropologies which treat men in general and leave the individual drained of too many differentiating characteristics. Even tradition, which otherwise acts as a preservative of the most vital characteristics of human groups, can be a danger when it becomes too mechanical and acts as a narcotic, as it seems to him to have done in Asia, which it put to sleep by eliminating too many of the other ingredients of a healthy life, too many other *Kräfte* which are indispensable to life and activity.

This thought is unrelated to any articulated rule or method, it is unstructured, perhaps it is altogether incapable of precise formulation; but as always with Herder, it is suggestive and has a clear general direction.

> If a savage loves his family as part of himself, and treats the interest of the tribe as his own, he is more genuine and real than mere specious phantoms [*i.e.*, his *bêtes noires*—the hollow "cosmopolitan" lovers of humanity in the abstract] who burn with love for other ghosts....
>
> The savage who loves himself, his wife and his child, and his tribe, can find room in his hut for a stranger: the saturated heart of the idle cosmopolitan is a home for no one....

He repeats throughout the *Ideas* that originality, freedom of choice and creation, is the divine element in man. When a savage speaks with vigour and precision he is superior to "the civilised man who stands on a pedestal built by others." There is much talk in the *Ideas* about men who live on other men's accounts: they are viewed as "dead cosmopolitans," men whose feelings have been drained away, dehumanised creatures, victims of nature and history, moral or physical cripples, parasites, fettered slaves.

HOW DO MEN COME to lose their humanity? By living on others and by the labour and ideas

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of others. Herder, in opposition to the primitivists, welcomed invention—the arts and sciences are fruits of the creative powers of man, and through them he rises to the full height of his purposive nature. Inventions as such do not corrupt (in this Herder differs sharply from Rousseau); only if one lives on the inventions of others does one become mechanical and devitalised. Here, as in the writings of Mably and Rousseau and Karl Friedrich von Moser[6] begins that lament, still more characteristic of the following century, and perhaps still more often heard in our own, for the youth that is gone for ever—for the lost virtues of an earlier, more vigorous epoch in the life of mankind.

Herder, no less than Mill or Carlyle or Ruskin, speaks with gloom about the triviality and lifelessness of modern men and modern art, in contrast with the full-blooded, doughty, independent human beings of the morning hours of humanity—the creators of the great epics and songs, of an anonymous but more robust age. Before Henri de Saint-Simon, he draws a contrast between the creative and the relatively sterile epochs in the history of culture. Herder has his optimistic moments, when he supposes that a renewal is possible: that if a man can only "cease to be in contradiction with himself" and "return to himself," and if peoples can only "find themselves" and "learn not to think in other people's thoughts," they can recover and revive and create new works of art, in modern terms, as noble and expressive of their true nature as anything that men have created in the past.[7] There is only one course against which Herder sets his face absolutely: that is any attempt to return to the past. Here there is no salvation. To sigh after the Greeks and wish to return to them, of which he suspects Winckelmann, is absurd and impossible: his idealisation of the Greeks as the originators of art which among them attained to a height never reached by, say, the Egyptians, is wholly unhistorical and nothing but a "terrible delusion."

THE DANGERS to free development are many. In the first place, there is the centralised state; it can rob us of something essential: it can rob us of ourselves. There are foreign cultures that "devour German folk song like a cancer"—folk song that is an answer to cravings, to collective desires that seek to embody common experiences in symbolic forms not dreamed of in Voltaire's philosophy. There is the more specific danger of foreign languages: "I am able to stammer with immense effort in the words of a foreign language; its spirit will evade me." Yet "to this we devote the best years of our life!" But we are not Greeks; we are not Romans; and we cannot become such. To wish to return is to be dominated by a false vision, a crippling illusion as fatal as any for which it attempts to be the cure.

What then must we do? We must seek to be ourselves. "Let us be characteristic of our nation, language, scene, and posterity will decide whether or not we are classical." Perhaps Klopstock's *Messias* was less successful than it might have been because it was not "national" enough.[8] It is here that Herder utters his most ardently nationalist sentiments:

> I cry to my German brothers... the remnants of all genuine folk songs are rolling into the abyss of oblivion... the light of so-called culture is devouring all about it like a cancer....
>
> We speak the words of strangers and they wean us from our own thought....

He sees no merit in "peasants in wigs" much as Hamann talks of "false noses." He appeals to the Germans to know themselves, to understand their place and respect their role in the cosmos, in time and in space.

V

IS THIS NATIONALISM? In an obvious sense it is. It is anti-French—the voyage to Nantes and Paris like the later journey to Rome depressed Herder acutely. He only understood the written languages: he could not understand what the French and the Italians said to him. He suffered that mixture of envy, humiliation, admiration, resentment, and defiant pride which backward peoples feel toward advanced ones, members of one social class towards those who belong to a higher rung in the hierarchy. Wounded national feeling—this scarcely needs saying—breeds nationalism, but it is important to realise that Herder's nationalism was never political. If he denounces individualism, he equally detests the state, which coerces and mutilates the free human personality. His social vision is antagonistic to governments, power domination. We cannot return to the Greek *polis*. Louis XIV and Frederick the Great (like Caesar and Charlemagne before them) represent a detestable ideal.

Herder does not ask for power and does not wish to assert the superiority of his own class

[6] Especially in Von Moser's *Von dem deutschen Nationalgeist*, published in 1765–66, which speaks of the Germans as despised, disregarded, mocked, and preyed upon by everyone.

[7] The phrases are almost verbally exact echoes of Hamann's sentences, dealing with what later came to be called the problem of "alienation."

[8] Professor Max Rouché, in his introduction to the French edition of Herder's *Auch Eine Philosophie der Geschichte*, is understandably surprised by the spectacle of a Christian clergyman complaining that the central theme of the Christian religion is perhaps too foreign a topic for a German poem.

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or culture or nation. He wishes to create a society in which men, whoever they are, can live full lives, attain to free self-expression, "be someone"; and he thinks that the less government they have the better. This may, indeed, have been the first stage of a development destined in its later stages to become nationalistic and chauvinistic in the full, aggressive sense. Whether or not this is historically and sociologically true, it is clear that Herder did not himself harbour these sentiments. Even though he seems to have coined the word "*Nationalismus*," his conception of a good society is closer to the anarchism of Thoreau or Proudhon or Kropotkin, and to the conception of a culture (*Bildung*) of which such liberals as Goethe and Humboldt were proponents, than to the ideals of Fichte or Hegel or political socialists. For him the *Nation* is not a political entity. He is repelled by the claims of contemporary Celtomaniacs and Teutomaniacs who rhapsodised over the ancient Gaels or Northmen. He celebrates German beginnings, German civilisation, because they are his own, not because they rank higher than that of others on some cosmic scale.

> In the works of the imagination and feeling the entire soul of a nation reveals itself most clearly.

This was developed by Sismondi, Michelet and Mazzini into a full-scale political-cultural doctrine; but Herder stands even closer to the outlook of Ruskin or Lamennais or William Morris, to populists and Christian Socialists, and to all of those who, in the present day, are opposed to hierarchies of status or power, or to the influence of manipulators of any kind (advertisers and "hidden persuaders"). He stands with those who protest against mechanisation and vulgarisation rather than with the nationalists of the last hundred years, whether moderate or violent. He favours autarchy, but only in personal life; that is, in artistic creation and the rights of natural self-expression. All his invocations of the *Nationalgeist* (an expression probably coined by Karl Friedrich von Moser), and of its many aliases—the *Geist des Volkes, Seele des Volkes, Geist der Nation, Genius des Volkes* and the more empirical *Nationalcharakter*—are intended to stress what is ours, not theirs, even though theirs may intrinsically be more valuable, viewed on some vaster scale.

Socrates is for him neither the timeless cosmopolitan sage of the Enlightenment, nor Hamann's destroyer of pretentious claims to knowledge whose irony and self-confessed ignorance opened the path to faith and salvation. Socrates is, above all, an Athenian of the fifth century; and that age is over. Aristotle may be more gifted than Leibniz. But Leibniz is ours and so is Shakespeare; other great geniuses, Homer and Moses, are not.

> Whom nature set apart by language, custom, character, let no man by chemistry put together. . . .
>
> Let us follow our own path . . . let men speak well or ill of our nation, our literature, our language: they are ours, they are ourselves, and let that be enough.

Better Germans, whatever they are, than counterfeit Greeks, Frenchmen, Englishmen. But when he says, "Awake, German nation! Don't let them ravish your Palladium!", when he declares that fearful storms are coming and warns men not to lie asleep like Jonah in the tempest, and when he tells men to take warning from the terrible example of partitioned Poland and says, "Poor torn, crushed Germany, be hopeful!" and "Germans, speak German! Spew out the Seine's ugly slime!" it is conceivable that this may eventually have fed the sinister nationalism of Görres or Jahn or Arndt or Treitschke and their monstrous modern successors. But Herder's own sentences refer to purely cultural self-determination; he hates "*policirte Nationen.*"

NATIONALITY FOR HIM is a purely and strictly cultural entity; he believes that people can and should defend their cultural heritage: they need never give in. He almost blames the Jews, despite his passionate addiction to their antiquities, for not preserving a sufficient sense of collective honour and making no effort to return to their home in Palestine, which is the sole place where they can blossom again into a *Nation*.

He is interested, not in nationality, but in cultures, in worlds, in the total experience of peoples; and the aspects of this experience that he celebrates are personal relationships, friendship and enmity, attitudes to nature, war and peace, art and science, ways in which truth, freedom and happiness are pursued, and in particular the relations of the great civilising leaders to the ungrateful mob. He fears organisation as such, and, like the early English Romantics, Edward Young, Thomas and Joseph Warton, he wants to preserve what is irregular and unique in life and in art—that which no system can wholly contain. His attack on political centralisation and intellectual polarisation springs from the same source. When he imagines the world as a garden which can contain many flowers, and when he speaks of the possible and desirable harmony between all the national cultures, he is not simply ignoring the aggressive potentialities of nation states or blandly assuming that there is no reason for conflict between various nationalisms: rather, he is deeply hostile to the growth of political,

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economic, military centralisation, but sees no reason why culturally autonomous communities need clash.

It may, of course, be unrealistic and unhistorical to suppose that one kind of autarchy need not lead to other and more dangerous kinds. But it is not the same kind of unrealism as that with which he, and the Enlightenment generally, are usually charged. His faith is not in nationalism, collectivism, Teutomania, or romantic state-worship, but in something that is, if anything, incompatible with these ideals. He is the earliest and greatest champion of those mysterious *Kräfte* which are "living and organic." There is, in the end, only one great creative *Kraft*. "What is alive in creation is, in all forms, shapes, channels, one spirit, one single flame." This is scarcely an empirical or scientific notion. He sings paeans to the *Seele des Volkes* which is the social incarnation of this Leibnizian *vis viva*, "unique, wonderful, inexplicable, ineradicable, and as old as the *Nation*." Its most vivid expression is, of course, not the state, but "the physiognomy of its speech."

The point that I wish to stress is that the true heir of this doctrine is not power politics but what came to be called Populism. It is this that acquired such momentum among the oppressed peoples of Eastern Europe, and later spread in Asia and Africa. It inspired not *étatistes* but believers in "grass roots"—Russian Slavophils, *Narodniks*, Christian Socialists, and all those admirers of folk art and of popular traditions whose enthusiasm assumed both serious and ridiculous shapes still not unfamiliar today. It may often have taken reactionary forms and fed the stream of aggressive nationalism; but the form in which Herder held it was democratic and peaceful, not only anti-dynastic and anti-*élitiste*, but deeply anti-political, directed against organised power, whether of nations, classes, races, or parties.[9]

I HAVE CALLED it populism: this movement, whether in Europe or outside it, is the nearest approximation to Herder's ideal. It is, as a rule, pluralistic, looks on government as an evil and to this day, animates folk enthusiasts and cultural fanatics, egalitarians and agitators for local autonomy, champions of arts and crafts, and the simple life, innocent utopians of all brands. It is based on belief in loose textures, voluntary associations, natural ties, and is bitterly opposed to armies, bureaucracies, "closed" societies of any sort.

Historically populism has, of course, become closely interwoven with real nationalism, and it has, indeed, often provided the soil in which blind xenophobia and irrationalism grew to monstrous heights; and this is no more accidental than the alliances of nationalism with democracy or romanticism or liberalism at various points in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it is an historical and moral error to identify the ideology of one period with its consequences at some other, or with its transformation in another context and in combination with other factors. The progeny of Herder in, let us say, England or America are to be found principally among those amateurs who became absorbed in the antiquities and forms of life (ancient and modern) of cultures other than their own, in Asia and Africa or the "backward" provinces of Europe or America; among professional travellers and collectors of ancient song and poetry, among enthusiastic and sometimes sentimental devotees of more primitive forms of life in the Balkans or among the Arabs; nostalgic *émigrés* and exiles like Richard Burton, Doughty, Lafcadio Hearn, the English companions of Gandhi or Ibn Saud; as well as serious students and philosophers of language and society.

Perhaps Herder's most characteristic descendants were to be found in Russia, in which he took so abiding an interest. In that country his ideas entered the thought of those critics and creative artists who developed not merely national and pseudo-national forms of their own native art but who became passionate champions of all "natural," "spontaneous," traditional forms of art and self-expression wherever they manifested themselves. These admirers of ethnic colour and variety as such, Mussorgsky, Stasov and the musicians and painters whom they inspired, so far from supporting authority and repression, stood politically on the left, and felt sympathy for all forms of cultural self-expression, especially on the part of persecuted minorities—Georgians, Poles, Jews, Finns, but also Spaniards, Hungarians, and other "unreconstructed" nations. They denounced, however unjustly and intemperately, such "organ grinders" as Rossini and Verdi, or neo-classical schools of painting, for alleged cosmopolitanism, for a tendency to destroy regional or national differences in favour of flat and mechanical forms of life, in short, for rootlessness (a term which afterwards became so sinister and ominous in the mouths of obscurantists and fascists), heartlessness, oppression and dehumanisation. All this is typically Herderian.

SOMETHING OF THIS KIND, too, may have entered Mazzini's ideal of the Young Italy which was to live in harmony and mutual understanding with

[9] "As you know, I do not concern myself with political matters," he wrote to Goethe from Paris, late in the century, and spoke the truth.

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Young Germany—and the "Young" of all nations—once they had thrown away the shackles of oppressive imperialism, of dynastic autocracies, of the denial of the rights of all "natural" human units, and attained to free self-determination. Such views may have been thoroughly utopian. But if they were nationalistic they were so in a sense very different from the later—and pejorative—sense of the word. Populism may have been in part responsible for isolationism, provincialism, suspicion of everything smooth, metropolitan, elegant and socially superior, hatred of the *beau monde* in all its forms; but with this went hostility to centralisation, dogmatism, militarism, and self-assertiveness, or in other words, all that is commonly associated with the full-grown nationalism of the nineteenth century, as well as with a deep antipathy to mobs (Herder carefully distinguishes the *Pöbel auf die Gassen*, "the rabble," from *Das Volk*, *i.e.*, "the body of the nation"—he was only a qualified democrat), and with a hatred of violence and conquest as strong as any to be found among the other greater Weimar humanists, Goethe, Wieland, and Schiller. The faithful followers of Herder may often have been—and can still be—confused, sentimental, impractical, ineffective, and sometimes ridiculous, but not managerial, calculating, or brutal. No one made more of this profound contrast than Herder himself.

IN THIS CONNECTION it is worth considering Herder's attitude to three great eighteenth-century myths which fed the stream of nineteenth-century nationalism.

The first is that of the superiority of a particular tribal culture. His denunciation of patriotic boastfulness—the *Favoritvolk* doctrine—has been referred to. One of the most quoted sentences from *Yet Another Philosophy of History* tells us that "Every nation has its own inner centre of happiness, as every sphere its own centre of gravity." This is what the historian, the critic, the philosopher must grasp, and nothing is more fatal than the attempted assimilation of the *Mittelpunkt* of one culture with those of others. "One must enter the time, the place, the entire history of a people"; one must "feel oneself (*sich einfühlen*) into everything." "This is what contemporary historians [he is referring to Schlözer] conspicuously fail to do. The reader of the Hebrew scriptures must be "a shepherd with shepherds, a peasant in the midst of an agricultural people, an oriental with the primitive dwellers in the East," whereas the *Aufklärer*—Gottsched, Lessing and Mendelssohn—tended to grade, to give ethical marks for excellence. Herder in this (what he would regard as a Spinozan) mood, warns, at any rate in *Auch Eine Philosophie* of 1774, against moral evaluation (prone though he was to it himself then and later) and urges the critic above all to understand. If one must condemn and praise, this should be done only after such an exercise of sympathetic insight—of the exercise of one's capacity for *Einfühlung* ("empathy"). This work contains the most eloquent description of the newly discovered sense of history, with its uncanny resemblance to that of Vico, whom so far as we can tell, Herder did not read until twenty years later:

> How unspeakably difficult it is to convey the particular quality of an individual human being (*Eigenheit*) and how impossible it is to say precisely what distinguishes an individual, his way of feeling and living; how different and how individual (*anders und eigen*) everything becomes once his eyes see it, once his soul grasps—his heart feels—it. How much depth there is in the character of a single people, which, no matter how often observed (and gazed at with curiosity and wonder), nevertheless escapes the word which attempts to capture it, and, even with the word to catch it, is seldom so recognisable as to be universally understood and felt. If this is so, what happens when one tries to master an entire ocean of peoples, times, cultures, countries, with one glance, one sentiment, by means of one single word! Words, pale shadow-play! An entire living picture of ways of life, or habits, wants, characteristics of land and sky, must be added, or provided in advance. One must start by feeling sympathy with a nation if one is to feel a single one of its inclinations or acts, or all of them together.

Greece, he continues, was not Athens. It was inhabited, and ruled by Athenians, Boeotians, Spartans, Corinthians. Egyptians were traders no less than Phoenicians. Macedon was a conqueror like Rome. Aristotle had as good a speculative mind as Leibniz. Yet (Herder repeats in and out of context) they were Egyptians, Romans, Greeks, Macedonians, and not inhabitants of each other's worlds, still less of ours. Leibniz belongs to "us"; Plato does not.

Similarity is not identity; one must see both the wood and the trees, although only God can do this completely. All history is an unending conflict between the general idea and the particular; all general ideas are abstractions, dangerous, misleading and unavoidable. One must seek to see the whole, however unattainable this goal may be. Exceptions and deviations will amaze only those who insist upon forcing an idealised image on the manifold of reality. Hume and Voltaire, Robertson and Schlözer, are denounced for using the measuring rod of their own time. All civilisations are incommensurable.

The critic must, so far as he is able, surrender to his author and seek to see with the author's

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eyes. Herder disagrees with Diderot's justly celebrated theory of the actor who is inwardly detached from it when he plays a role.[10] Genuine translation from one language—that is, way of life—into another is, of course, impossible; no real idiom is literally translatable; the olives sacred to Minerva that grew round the Academy cannot be taken beyond the frontiers of Athens.

> Even when Sparta ravaged Athens, the goddess protected her grove. So no one can take the beauties of our language from us: beauties woven into its texture, glimmering like Phryne's bosom beneath her silken veil.

To translate is—for better or for worse—to create; the translation must be an *Originalarbeit* by a *schöpferisches Genie*, and, of course, because the creator is what he is, and not someone or something else, a great deal is, and must be, lost. Egypt must not be judged by Greek criteria, or by Shaftesbury's modern ones; the school boy is not joyless because he takes no pleasure in the avocations of a grown man, nor were the Middle Ages worthless because they do not please Voltaire: there is more in the great ferment of the Dark Ages than the absurdities of Ripuarian or Salic laws. The Middle Ages are not a corridor to the Renaissance, nor is paganism an anteroom of Christianity. One culture is never a mere means to another; even if there is a sense in which mankind as a whole is advancing, each of the stages is an end in itself: men are never means to ends beyond themselves. No less than his opponent Kant, he fervently preaches the doctrine that only persons and societies, and almost all of these, are good in themselves—indeed they are all that is good, wholly good, in the world that we know. These maxims, which now at least in the West seem so platitudinous, were antinomian heresies in the middle of the eighteenth century in Paris and its intellectual dependencies.

So much for the myth of the Dominant Model.

STILL BOLDER WAS Herder's rejection of the historical myths of the century: of the French myth of classical culture created by the Gallo-Romans, in which lay the true soul of France, and which the barbarians destroyed; and equally of the counter-myth of the superiority of the Frankish conquerors, to which support had been given by Montesquieu, Mallet, and Boulainvilliers. Similarly, Herder has no truck with the Renaissance myth of the sunlit pagan world killed by the gloomy, pleasure-destroying Christian religion; he uses harsh words about the monks who suppressed the old German songs; but this does not lead him to a general denunciation of the Middle Ages; it is not the dark haunt of the "demons, slaves, diabolical priests and tyrants" represented by Voltaire, Gibbon, Hume, and later still, Heine and all the neo-pagans.

But neither does he uphold the growing German-Protestant legend of the uncorrupted, fearless, Cheruscan warrior Hermann canonised by Klopstock as Arminius, and then, in the shape of the young Siegfried, placed by Richard Wagner in the German nationalist pantheon. These fantasies offer no avenue of escape. All attempts to flee, whether to modern Paris or the dark German woods, are condemned by Herder as being equally deluded. Those who, for whatever reason, will not face reality are doomed.

THE THIRD GREAT MYTH of the eighteenth century was that of steady progress, if not inevitable, at least virtually certain; with the consequent disparagement of the benighted past, which entailed the view of all earlier centuries as so many steps towards the superior life of the present and the still more wonderful life of the future.

Herder rejects this completely. "Each (culture) is a harmonious lyre—one must merely have the ear to hear its melodies." Those who seek to understand must learn to grasp the respects in which Abraham or Leonidas or Caesar are not men of our time—to see change as it occurs, not in juxtaposed segments which can be detached, compared, and awarded marks for merit, for the degree to which they approach our standards of enlightenment. Is there, then, no progress? Are all cultures equally valuable? This is not Herder's view. There is *Fortgang*, but this is not the same as the notion of progress enunciated by, say, Turgot or Condorcet—or, in particular by Voltaire (for example, in *La Philosophie d'histoire par feu l'Abbé Bazin*), against whom, together with the Swiss philosopher of history Iselin, Herder's thunderbolts are specifically directed. *Fortgang* ("advance") is the development of human beings as integrated wholes and, more particularly, their development as groups —tribes, cultures, and communities determined by language and custom, creating out of the "totality of their collective experience," and expressing themselves in works of art that are consequently intelligible to common men, and in sciences and crafts and forms of social and political and cultural life that fulfil the cravings (conscious and unconscious) and develop the faculties of a given society in its interplay with

[10] *Nous sentons, nous; ils observent* . . . which holds for all artists.

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its alterable, but not greatly alterable, natural environment.

> To bind and interrogate this Proteus, which is usually called national character and which shows itself certainly not less in the writings than in the usages and actions of a nation—that is a high and beautiful philosophy. It is practised most surely in poetry; for in the works of imagination and feeling the entire soul of nations reveals itself most freely.

This is what the classical Greeks succeeded in doing so marvellously. Despite all Hamann's anathemas, Herder cannot refrain from expressing his passionate admiration for the culture of Athens—a feeling that he shared with Goethe and Hegel, Hölderlin and Schiller and, indeed, with the majority of the civilised Germans of his time, romantic and anti-romantic alike. Herder thinks the Greek achievement is in part due to the beauty of nature in Greece, a beauty which inspired principles that those fortunate inhabitants (mistakenly but excusably) regard as objective, and universally valid.

But there must be no *Favoritvolk*; he hastens to add to the list Kashmiris and Persians, Bokharans and Circassians, who also lived in beautiful natural surroundings, grew handsome themselves and produced beautiful cultures (unlike the Hebrews whose merits are not aesthetic). The Greeks advanced; they developed their own faculties harmoniously and triumphantly because nature was propitious and because no great natural accidents arrested this development. But they are not a hallway to the Romans, whose civilisation must be judged in terms of its own internal criteria, its own *Schwerpunkt*—"centre of gravity."

Fortgang is the internal development of a culture in its own *habitat*, towards its own goals; but because there are some qualities that are universal in man, one culture can study, understand, and admire another, even though it cannot return to it and will only make itself foolish if it tries.

At times Herder speaks like Bossuet: as if history were not an episodic story but a vast drama; as if the finger of God guided the destinies of humanity in some teleological fashion, a play in which each great cultural epoch was an act. He does not develop this notion, which led Bossuet to see each act as in some degree a link between its predecessor and its successor. More often he speaks as if history were indeed a drama but one without a *dénouement*: as if it were like a cosmic symphony of which each movement is significant in itself, and of which, in any case, we cannot hear the whole for God alone does so. The later movements are not necessarily closer to, or a prefiguring of, some ultimate goal and, therefore, superior to the earlier movements.

There is for Herder no great single world-tree, no *Yggdrasil*. Life is not a jigsaw puzzle of which the fragments must fit into some single pattern in terms of which alone they are all intelligible, so that what seems, taken in isolation, irrational or ugly, is seen to be an indispensable ingredient in the great harmonious whole—the World Spirit come to full self-consciousness of itself, in Hegel's famous image. Herder believes in the development of each movement of the symphony (each act of the drama) in terms of its own ends, its own values, which are none the worse or less morally valuable because they will pass or be destroyed and be succeeded by others. There is a general purpose to be achieved by human life on earth, which he calls *Humanität*. This is a notoriously vague term, in Herder and the *Aufklärung* generally, connoting harmonious development of all immortal souls towards universally valid goals: reason, freedom, health, finer perceptions, dominion over the earth, the harmonious realisation of all that God has implanted in His noblest work and made in His own image. This is a characteristically general and optimistic formula of the humanist enlightenment, which Herder adopts, but which he does not seem to have used widely (for it has no precise connotation) as a universal criterion either of explanation or of value. He wants above all to be comprehensive and fair. He dislikes Gothic architecture despite the eloquence which made so deep an impression on Goethe in Strasburg; he is repelled by chivalry, by medieval values in general, but he defends them against Voltaire, against caricatures. He placed no great value, particularly towards the end of his life, upon primitivism as such, and in this respect differed from its true admirers in the eighteenth century.

Yet colonial subjugation of native populations is always represented as being morally odious and as a crime against *Humanität*. If paganism requires to be defended against Christian attack, and Homer against Klotz and the *Encyclopédie*, so must Christianity be defended against d'Holbach, Voltaire, and the Sinophiles, and the Chinese and Mongols in their turn against the arrogance of Europeans. The shamans of central Asia, he insists, are not just deceivers; nor are myths simply false statements about reality invented by wicked priests to bamboozle and acquire power over the masses, as Bayle and Voltaire had made the world believe; nor are the inventions of poets merely intended to give pleasure or to instruct. Here he stands with Vico, long before he read him (if ever he did).

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Shamans express in the form of myth and superstition objects of men's natural wishes—a vision of the world from which poetry naturally springs and which it expresses. Whole worlds are created by such poetry, worlds worthy of man and his creative powers, worlds not commensurable with other worlds, but all equally worthy of our interest and in need of our insight, because they are worlds made by men; by contemplating them we may succeed in grasping what we, in our turn, can be and create. We do this not by learning the lessons of the past (he sometimes says that the past repeats itself, but his central doctrine, in opposition to Hume or Voltaire, is that each page is unique), but rather because the vision of past creation inspires us to find our own centre of gravity, our own *Mittelpunkt* or *Schwerpunkt* or that of the group—nation, region, community—to which we belong. Without such belonging there is no true creation, no true realisation of human goals. Hence to foist alien values on a *Nation* (as missionaries are doing, for example, in India) is both ineffective and harmful. Worst of all are those who have no group, because they are exiled or self-exiled, physically or spiritually (for Herder the two are not very different) and so doomed to sterility. Such disintegration seemed to him to threaten the Germans in his own day. Indignantly some of his modern critics point out that he condemned France—the France of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries!—as being an exhausted society.

BUT WHATEVER his failings as a prophet (and he speaks with many voices, some of them far from distinct and often uttering contradictory sentiments), as a social psychologist he rose above his generation; more clearly than any other writer, he conceived and cast light upon the crucially important social function of "belonging"—on what it is to belong to a group, culture, a movement, a form of life. It was a most original achievement.

(*A concluding part of Isaiah Berlin's essay will be published next month.*)

A Savage Darkness

A savage darkness falls like a feather cloak around your shoulders,
hot and humid, whispering like dry palm fronds in a low night wind.

The black flames of your hair burn up the pillow, consume the room
in a tangle of drifting smoke pierced by far-away sounds—black
birds cawing menacing enticements in the fuliginous obscurity.

A music of ghostly flutes stirs the pools of shadows in the
corners of the room. Reeds rustle, thrust aside by lurking beasts
and long rents appear in the hangings on the walls, torn by spectral
and invisible fingers.

An unseen brush writes a message on the ceiling. ANATA WA LO MONI
KA HAI MAWANA KO. Meaningless as a snail's tracks on leaves or the
print of birds' claws on a lonely beach among sea grass and
whitened branches, where a black stone waits above buried bones.

Far-off morning lies ahead, a cold harbour of refuge beyond the
billowing sea of flames and feathers swaying to a wind of sighs.

Michael Bullock

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Rosemary Tonks

Farewell to Kurdistan

As my new life begins, I start smiling at the people around me,
You would think I'd just been given a substantial meal,
I see all their good points.
The railway sheds are full of greenish-yellow electricity,
It's the great mid-day hour in London . . . that suddenly goes brown.
. . . My stupefying efforts to make money
And to have a life!
Well, I'm leaving; nothing can hold me.

The platforms are dense to the foot,
Rich, strong-willed travellers pace about in the dark daylight,
And how they stink of green fatty soaps, the rich.
More dirty weather . . . you can hardly see the newspaper stand
With its abominable, ludicrous papers . . . which are so touching
I ought to laugh and cry, instead of gritting my teeth.

Let me inhale the filthy air for the last time,
Good heavens, how vile it is . . . I could take you step by step
Back among the twilight buildings, into my old life. . . .

The trains come in, boiling, caked!
The station half tames them, there's the sound of blows; the uproar!
And I—I behave as though I've been starved of noise,
My intestine eats up this big music
And my new bourgeois soul promptly bursts into flames, in mid-air.

No use pouring me a few last minutes of the old life
From your tank of shadow, filled with lost and rotten people,
I admit: the same flow of gutter-sugar to the brain. . . .
I admit it, London.

No one to see me off—Ah!
I would like to be seen off; it must be the same agonising woman
Who does not want to understand me, and who exposes me in public,
So that I can turn away, choked with cold bile,
And feel myself loved absolutely; the bitch.

These carriages, that have the heavy brown and black bread
Up their sides! But look out for the moment of cowardice,
It's Charon's rowing-boat that lurches and fouls my hand
As I climb on—exile, Limboist.

. . . The way these people get on with their lives; I bow down
With my few deeds and my lotus-scars.
Last minutes . . . last greenish-yellow minutes
Of the lost and rotten hours . . . faro, and old winters dimmed,
On which the dark—Yes, the black sugar-crust is forming, London.

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I'm leaving! Nothing can hold me!
The trains, watered and greased, scream to be off.
Hullo—I'm already sticking out my elbows for a piece of territory,
I occupy my place as though I can't get enough of it
—And with what casual, haughty, and specific gestures, incidentally.

Tradesmen, Pigs, regenerative trains—I shall be saved!
I shall go to the centre of Europe; gliding
As children skate on the diamond lid of the lake
Never touching ground—Xenophile, on the blue-plated meadows.

Oh I shall live off myself, rainclothes, documents,
The great train simmers . . . Life is large, large!
. . . I shall live off your loaf of shadows, London;
I admit it, at the last.

Francis Hope

Father Bird Speaks

Christ, how those fledglings chatter!
  To hear them, one would think
A bird had nothing better

To do all day than comb
  This dry suburban garden
For worms to carry home.

Sometimes I dream those bloody
  Great jaws don't stop at worms
But quicksand up my body

Snap, crackle, Pop. But still
  I know my nature now,
No use to say I will

(Today, sometime, next week)
  Desert the little slobs,
Sing till I break my beak.

No sort or kind of merit,
  This virtue, but a thing
I can't choose but inherit:

Only those strains survive
  Which feel the strongest urge
To keep their young alive,

And so to their own brood
  Conveniently bequeath
The leanings to be good.

Cats, children, hunger prove
  How much our being here
At all is fenced with love;

And we in turn prolong
  A race of careful birds,
All nests, and little song

And yet, we could be wrong. . . .

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THEATRE

A Play and Its Plot

By John Gross

SO MANY NOVELS have been flattened out on the stage, so many novelists-turned-playwrights have come to grief before you could say Guy Domville, that it is pleasant to be able to report that Miss Ivy Compton-Burnett has survived the passage from print to proscenium largely unscathed, and that *A Heritage and its History*, in a highly efficient adaptation by Julian Mitchell, provides one of the most satisfying evenings currently available in the London theatre. In retrospect there seems nothing astonishing about this; on the contrary, the only cause for surprise is that a Compton-Burnett novel hasn't been dramatised long before now. Yet it is rash to assume that the novelist who deals mainly in dialogue is necessarily the one whose work can most easily be transferred to the stage. Miss Compton-Burnett, for example, is a strikingly non-visual author; her characters are co-existent with their speech, moral presences rather than creatures of flesh and blood. Allow them to materialise, as it were, with all the distracting impedimenta of limbs and faces, complexions and costumes, and there is a danger that they will sound no more than mannered, that their corrosive exchanges will be diluted into mere banter. Or again, it might reasonably have been expected that a typical Compton-Burnett plot, with its extravagant dose of incest and skulduggery, couldn't stand up to the full exposure of theatrical presentation. Wasn't the melodramatic machinery bound to creak too loudly?

As it turns out, the plot, far from hampering the play, sustains it and carries it forward—proving once again, if proof is still needed, that the first test of a good plot is not plausibility, but how effectively it sets up situations in which a writer's particular gifts can be exercised to advantage. A novelist more interested in psychological exploration than Miss Compton-Burnett might well choose a less drastic way of handling her perennial themes; but she herself needs a "strong" situation in which to demonstrate her clean, sharp strokes. The result is much closer to comedy than tragedy—and indeed, despite all the skeletons rattling in her cupboards, no one could really call her a macabre writer, either: her wit shines too brightly. In *A Heritage and its History*, she returns to familiar ground—self-deception, domestic tyranny, intolerable consanguinity. The underlying passions are all-consuming, the central character virtually a monomaniac, the ending coldly cynical. Yet the writing is characterised not only by aphoristic glitter and ruthless precision, but also by high spirits, even gaiety.

Something of the full Compton-Burnett flavour is lost on stage at the Phoenix, but this is pretty well inevitable, and very little blame can be attached to Frank Hauser's admirable production, with its ceremonious movements and frozen groupings. A few of the cast lacked polish, and the sets were uninspired: personally I should like to have seen a touch of whimsical elegance *à la* Edward Gorey. But if it wasn't a flawless evening, it was decidedly more distinguished than what usually passes for high comedy nowadays.

MISS COMPTON-BURNETT and Frank Wedekind make strange bedfellows; but at least they share a fine economy of means, the ability to side-step inessentials and to move rapidly and relentlessly through a cluttered scene. If *Spring Awakening* is anything to go by, that is; for one of the play's great virtues turns out to be its dynamism and pace. Episodes flare and fade out like revue sketches, with a minimum of plot-carpentry and expository fuss, but without sacrificing clarity. Everything flows.

Those of us to whom Wedekind was not much more than a name trailing vague associations of harsh hot-house eroticism and incipient expressionism owe a considerable debt to the Royal Court for their recent revival of his early play, all the more so after the preposterous behaviour of the National Theatre board (as disclosed by Penelope Gilliatt in the *Observer*) in overruling their artistic advisers and vetoing the production. *Spring Awakening* is not only a work of remarkable originality, given the date (1890) and the author's age (twenty-six); there is also enough anger and tenderness in it, and enough imaginative force, to make watching it in 1965 a moving experience, something more than inspecting a historical curiosity.

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Curiosity-value it undoubtedly has; on the surface, with its heavy upholstery and rigid taboos, its disconcerting mixture of cosiness and brutality, it strikes one as perfectly of its period, infinitely German and infinitely dated. This is a society crying out for Freud; equally, youth movements and sunbathing are just around the corner. But if the play were no more than a dramatised tract on behalf of sex education or whatever, it could be assumed to have done its work (though not perhaps with the board of the National Theatre) and left to gather dust. In fact Wedekind's involvement with his material is plainly far more intimate than that of the ordinary social reformer, and his fantasies touch a correspondingly deeper nerve. *Spring Awakening* bears all the marks of being the one story which the author had to tell, at any cost.

It is an immature piece of work, in many ways; the self-pity shows through too nakedly, a lot of the humour is at the pea-shooter and catapult level. But it enjoys the advantages of immaturity, as well as suffering from the drawbacks: there is a freshness about it (in the first half, at least), a genuine sense of life budding and stirring, which justifies the title. Through the murk of secrecy and repression, idyllic possibilities can be glimpsed. At the same time the current of masochism runs strongly, especially around Wendla, the girl who wants to remain dressed like a child, and who eventually dies as the result of an abortion arranged by her mother. But the mother, though absurd, isn't an ogress; her fumbling and faltering when she tries to tell Wendla the facts of life, for instance, is pitiable rather than funny. Similarly Mrs. Gabor, mother of Wendla's opposite number among the boys, Melchior, drops her "progressive" ideas on the spot as soon as she learns that her son has slept with the girl, and surpasses her husband in the vehemence with which she condemns him to a reformatory. But she surely isn't meant to be quite as ludicrous as the Royal Court production assumed; there is an element of pathos, even of warmth, in the part. It is the mothers in the play who arouse the strongest feelings, however mixed; by contrast the fathers and father-figures are men of straw, wholly to be rejected.

This may explain the falling-away in the second half, when the personifications of paternal authority are wheeled to the front. Melchior's father is the merest dummy; his schoolmasters, gathered in whiskery conclave in order to expel him, provide some simple knockabout entertainment, but nothing stronger. Where the educational system does strike fear is when it drives Melchior's friend Moritz to suicide with its fierce competitive pressures; but even this pales if one thinks, say, of Dr. Blimber's academy in *Dombey and Son*, where the boys spoke Greek in their sleep.

The coarser the satire against the parents becomes, the weaker our response to the plight of the children. Melchior's confinement in the reform school isn't as affecting as it is meant to be; it is too obvious a bid for sympathy, too raw and undistanced. And then, as though reacting against his own over-explicitness, Wedekind takes refuge in the supernatural. Moritz's ghost rises from the grave and lures Melchior towards the shades, but he is thwarted by the arrival of a life-affirming stranger in evening dress—a forerunner of all those unannounced visitors and enigmatic emissaries who stalk through modern drama bearing the secret of the universe. It doesn't work, and the play peters out. But in retrospect one can forget about the last sticky half-hour or so; what stay in mind are the opening scenes, firm, poignant, and entirely convincing. Desmond O'Donovan handled the play skilfully, but he was let down by some patchy acting. There were good solid performances, however, from Derek Fowlds as Melchior and Richard Brooke as poor tongue-tied Moritz (the part in which Peter Lorre originally made his name).

The Rites of Spring have been succeeded at the Royal Court by late-flowering lust and senile decay. Charles Wood's comedy *Meals on Wheels* has the charm of almost total obscurity, like a house without doors or windows, although here and there a tiny crevice of intelligibility admits a message about patriotism or sex. The personnel are a goatish nonagenarian and his two sons, one preoccupied with his fancied resemblance to the Duke of Windsor, the other desperate to get married, but constantly falling foul of a hefty commissionaire, the prurient local custodian of morals. An image of the way we live now, presumably, yet one more view of Britain as a huge grotesque compost-heap of decayed grandeur. Certainly this is borne out by the splendid antique junk which litters the stage, and the matching dialogue—a mixture of parade-ground invective and music-hall patter. "Champagne to our real friends, and real pain to our sham friends"—normally I could listen to such stuff for ever. But here the rowdyism obstinately refused to catch on, and the blaring self-confidence of the tunes played between the acts, "I've got a Lovely Bunch of Coconuts" and the rest, only served to show up the prevailing pallor. Still, there were enough flashes of dramatic energy to suggest that when Mr. Wood sits down and takes a little trouble he may well write an interesting play.

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NOTES & TOPICS

Yeats & Eliot

POETS scarcely love each other. The coincidence which joins in the same year Yeats' centenary and Eliot's death invokes also the troubled congress of the two men during their lifetimes. Among their various mild collisions none was more defined than the dinner at Wellesley College when Yeats, seated next to Eliot but oblivious of him, conversed with the guest on the other side until late in the meal. He then turned and said, "My friend here and I have been discussing the defects of T. S. Eliot's poetry. What do you think of that poetry?" Eliot held up his place card to excuse himself from the jury.

For Eliot as a young man looking for French ironies, Yeats was ornate and romantic, a protracted Pre-Raphaelite, while for Yeats as an old man, looking for wildness and strangeness, Eliot was too plain, a belated Alexander Pope, making poetry resemble prose. To others as well as to himself, Yeats was accustomed to describe Eliot's verse as grey, cold, dry, flat, bare. While acknowledging its effect on the young, he regarded it as counter-revolutionary rather than revolutionary. Eliot, eluding the inheritance of the Hydraulic Press Brick Company of St. Louis, could not forget it. The gashouse and operating table replaced, as Yeats observed without enthusiasm, romantic metaphor, but only to cause Eliot a second aversion. The world became real to Eliot only to the degree that it was revolting. Auden's delight in the machinery of the gashouse, while inexplicable to Yeats, was at any rate a passion for the world and so preferable to Eliot's distaste.

Yeats was also critical of Eliot's Christianity. He thought it for a modern mind unreal. At his most indulgent, he allowed that it might serve Eliot as "a convenient symbolism for some older or newer thought." At his most severe, he considered Eliot's religious development a false solution of the contemporary aesthetic problem, because it entailed submission rather than search. What was necessary was to map out an "exposition of intellectual needs" such as Yeats' own *Vision* provided; instead Eliot surrendered to belief. Yeats thought he saw in Eliot's work the turning of intellect upon itself, so that even when myth was employed, it was held rigidly apart from fact to play two tunes instead of one.

THIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS Eliot remained fixed. Eliot's attitude towards Yeats underwent, on the other hand, a curious change. When he arrived in London in 1914, he was not eager to be anyone's disciple, Yeats' least of all. Ezra Pound brought him two or three times into the presence, and Eliot allowed himself only to be bored. Yeats' two subjects of conversation at that period, he said, later, were "George Moore and spooks." It is hard to know which interested him less. He did not go to Woburn Buildings any more. For several years he thought of Yeats as a left-over from the 'nineties, an out-of-the-way interest of Pound's. Then at some point Eliot had to modify his view. There is evidence of punctilious wobbling in Eliot's choice of the date when this climactic recognition occurred. Once he hit on 1916, the year that he attended a performance of Yeats' play, *At the Hawk's Well*, and was surprised by the strength of its diction. His surprise was evidently tempered, however, by the feeling which he also expressed later, that the play did not solve the problem of writing modern verse drama. 1919 is the other year Eliot gives for his having been won over to Yeats, evidently by the volume *The Wild Swans at Coole*. But this date must also be too early, for his review of a book of Yeats' essays in the *Athenaeum* during that year largely dismisses him as "a foreign mind," not foreign only to England but to the earth in general, a mind "in some way independent of experience." Neither poet agreed with the other's way of walking on the earth. Eliot is stern: "His remoteness is not an escape from the world, for he is innocent of any world to escape from." He finds Yeats' mind to be crude and egoistic because of not facing direct contacts, and successful only in achieving solipsism. He returns to the attack in "A Cooking Egg," published the following year, where the lines,

> *I shall not want Pipit in Heaven:*
> *Madame Blavatsky will instruct me*
> *In the Seven Sacred Trances,*

must mock Yeats' membership in the Theosophical Society.

In 1923 Eliot, reviewing *Ulysses*, mentions Yeats favourably for "adumbrating" what must now be the new method in literature, of manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity. To adumbrate is however not to achieve, and it is Joyce rather than Yeats who is praised for perfecting the method. Evidently Eliot was as yet only slightly concessive, for in 1925 Ezra Pound, who was in a position to know, remarked in a letter, "Eliot don't see either Yeats or Hardy." There

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is some confirmation of Pound in 1933, when Eliot discussed Yeats rather patronisingly in lectures eventually published under the title *After Strange Gods*. Yeats had been guilty of two mistakes, Eliot discovered; he had tried to make poetry supplant religion, and he had tried to fabricate an individual religion. Eliot supports himself with a remark of I. A. Richards (not always his ally) that Yeats had repudiated life in favour of a supernatural world, one insufficiently connected with normal experience. Eliot could hardly forbid a supernatural enthusiasm, but Yeats' supernatural world was the wrong one, provincial and eccentric. He is really still objecting, though in lecture language, to Yeats' spooks. Then, to lighten his attack, Eliot praises Yeats for having given up most of his eccentricity in his more recent, austere poetry. He quotes with only partial sympathy—because its subject is regret—one passage from Yeats' poem, "Vacillation":

Things said or done long years ago,
Or things I did not do or say
But thought that I might say or do,
Weigh me down, and not a day
But something is recalled,
My conscience or my vanity appalled.

And Eliot concludes with evident strain that "Yeats has arrived at greatness against the greatest odds." In his last years Eliot rather regretted the whole volume in which this criticism appeared, and would not allow it to be republished.

THE DEATH OF YEATS a few years later (1939) prompted Eliot to speak more handsomely of him. In the provincial and eccentric capital he told his Dublin audience that Yeats was "the greatest poet of our time—certainly the greatest in this language, and so far as I am able to judge, in any language." He later omitted this praise, perhaps feeling it was too fulsome or too trite an obituary. But the rest of his speech, which he kept intact in reprinting, testified to his respect. He takes the opportunity to defend Yeats' poem, "The Spur,"

You think it horrible that lust and rage
Should dance attendance upon my old age;
They were not such a plague when I was young:
What else have I to spur me into song?

Eliot comments in the poem's favour, "To what honest man, old enough, can these sentiments be entirely alien? They can be subdued and disciplined by religion, but who can say that they are dead?" In his conclusion to this essay, Eliot indicates that he finds Yeats' thought and feeling in some aspects unsympathetic, and that there remain vital questions in the field of doctrine, which ultimately affect one's view of the poet. He boggles still, yet has clearly undertaken with conscience the literary experience of learning to like what one does not like.

So it is particularly admirable, after this, to find the figure of Yeats reappearing in Eliot's poetry, in *Little Gidding* (1942). He reappears like one of his own spooks, and in ghostly form converses with Eliot who is patrolling London streets in wartime during an air-raid. Though not named, and though, as Eliot said later, the figure blends various writers, especially Yeats and Swift, it is primarily and recognisably Yeats. Some of the lines suggest that Eliot had reached a new and final stage in his onerous relationship with Yeats. The spirit of the dead poet, no longer aggressive and tormented, warns the living one ironically of what gifts to expect in old age:

Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age
To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort.
First, the cold friction of expiring sense
Without enchantment, offering no promise
But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit
As body and soul begin to fall asunder.
Second, the conscious impotence of rage
At human folly, and the laceration
Of laughter at what ceases to amuse.
And last, the rending pain of re-enactment
Of all that you have done, and been; the shame
Of motives late revealed, and the awareness
Of things ill done and done to others' harm
Which once you took for exercise of virtue.
Then fools' approval stings, and honour stains.
From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit
Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire
Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.

In more didactic phrasing to suit the purgatorial scene, Eliot is paraphrasing here not only Yeats' poem on lust and rage, "The Spur," but also the other poem on remorse, "Vacillation," which he had quoted earlier. There is a further tribute to Yeats in these lines: Eliot uses the images of fire and dance in the way they are used in Yeats' poem, "Byzantium," as images of the timeless—

At midnight on the Emperor's pavement flit
Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit,
Nor storm disturbs, flames begotten of flame,
Where blood-begotten spirits come
And all complexities of fury leave,
Dying into a dance,
An agony of trance,
An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.

THE DISAGREEMENTS with Yeats over doctrine are forgotten, and nothing is said this time about provinciality or eccentricity. Just as in the third part of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the collocation of Buddha and St. Augustine, represen-

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tatives of Christian and non-Christian cultures, is, as Eliot says warily in his footnote, "not accidental," so the collocation of Yeats and Eliot here is deliberate and marks the reconciliation of their lifelong differences. Eliot thought this last of the *Four Quartets* his best poem, and perhaps one reason for his estimate was that it brought about his *rapprochement* with the poet who had always been formidably present in his consciousness. True friendship was only possible after Yeats was dead, and could be sifted down to those elements which Eliot found congenial. That he found, at last, so many, is a measure of Yeats' continued sway over his mind.

Richard Ellmann

Race, Hate, Sex, and Colour

A Conversation

MOSSMAN: James Baldwin, can I start by reminding you that somewhere in your work you said that when you were young you hated white people. When did you stop hating them—and assuming you have, what made you?

BALDWIN: When I was young, I don't remember exactly what I said, but I remember the moment—I hated white people because I was afraid of them, because they made me suffer: and, as far as I could tell, tended to continue making me suffer, and people around me, because of our colour. I was in Paris when I was talking to a girl-friend of mine—this is the moment I remember. We were having a fight, and I forget what we were fighting about exactly, but something I said made her say: "Why do you hate them?" I forget why I hated them according to what I said. But she said: "That isn't why you hate them."

MOSSMAN: She was coloured?

BALDWIN: She was white, Norwegian. She said: "That isn't why you hate them, you hate them because they're white." I can't describe this exactly, but the moment she said it I realised it was true. It was as though I was looking at some pit at my feet, and the moment I realised that it was true, if you see what I mean, it ceased to be true. Once I realised, and could accept in myself, in fact, it was true I hated white people, then I didn't hate them any more.

MOSSMAN: Was your family, when you were brought up in Harlem, white-hating naturally, and did they take it for granted that you would be?

BALDWIN: No, it's more subtle than that. It's something which seeps into you before you know it. For example, I'm sure my father hated white people. He never said he did—or didn't say so till I was much older—but he must have, because of what he had endured during all his working days. And he must have because of what he watched happening to his children.

MACINNES: Do you think a hatred is sometimes necessary and creative in certain contexts of life?

BALDWIN: Well it depends, I would think, Colin, on some kind of fusion of energy in the

THIS CONVERSATION *was recorded and televised recently by the B.B.C. in its Encounter series.* JAMES BALDWIN'S *novels,* Go Tell It on the Mountain *and* Another Country *have just been released as Corgi paperbacks.* COLIN MACINNES' *trilogy on London life,* City of Spades, Absolute Beginners, *and* Mr. Love and Justice (*MacGibbon & Kee and Penguin*), *also deals with aspects of Negro life.* JAMES MOSSMAN *is a foreign correspondent and the author of* Rebels in Paradise.

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person, which can be a useful hatred, certainly. But the hatred I'm speaking of is mainly useless; it's mainly self-destructive. It turns against the person, it turns against yourself.

MacInnes: Can I ask you, James, when you find people of your own race who have a hatred still for white people what your reaction is?

Baldwin: Well... I can't.... To tell you the truth, I have two reactions or at least two.... I can't blame any black boy or girl for what they feel about white people. I really can't from the bottom of my heart blame them for it. The evidence is all too clear. On the other hand, for their sakes, for the sake of their souls, having nothing whatever to do with the white world, or anybody else except this one person, this girl and this boy, one would like to make vivid to them, make real to them, that this hatred is a poison which is killing them.

Mossman: Well, take a man like Malcolm X, for example, and his creed of violence, or the use of violence as justified in pursuing equality for Negroes in America—now would you say that Malcolm X in the end was destroying the people he promoted to use violence? Destroying, therefore, in a sense, the Negro cause?

Baldwin: I'm not sure I know exactly what the Negro cause is....

Mossman: The search for equality as individual persons in America.

MacInnes: Search for identity and freedom, isn't it?

Baldwin: Which is much closer to my intention certainly than the word "equality" which always leaves me wondering equal to whom and to what, and why, what for? But I would never have sent any child of mine to school to Malcolm, and I would—for myself—much rather die than become that kind of theologian.

Mossman: Your father was a preacher, wasn't he? And wanted you to become one, and you refused, or you didn't like it and you....

Baldwin: No, I became a preacher for three years, and I quit.

Mossman: You were about 18 when you quit. Does that mean you rejected his sort of holy and passive attitude to the subject?

MacInnes: To add a rider to that question—you spoke just now of the soul, the soul of the black man, the soul of the white man. I never have been able to make out, Jimmy, whether you are or are not a religious writer. Are you? Does the concept of God mean something to you? Are you a believer in any sense, or not?

Baldwin: I'm not a believer in any sense which would make sense to any church, and any church would obviously throw me out. I believe—what do I believe? I believe in... I believe in love—that sounds very corny, you know....

MacInnes: Not to me, it doesn't.

Baldwin: I believe we can save each other. In fact I think we must save each other. I don't depend on anyone else to do it.

Mossman: But—getting back to the politics of Negro activists who are fighting for these legal and social rights—how far does your concept of love force them to behave in the utmost passive way, and just wait for the sun to rise?

MacInnes: This is nonsense. Love is not passive, is it? Love is active.

Mossman: Well, I don't know what he means by love.

Baldwin: I don't mean anything passive. I mean something active, something more like a fire, like the wind, something which can change you. I mean energy. I mean a passionate belief, a passionate knowledge of what a human being can do, and become, what a human being can do to change the world in which he finds himself.

MacInnes: I know it's maddening when people quote single sentences of yours back at you, but I remember you writing that in New York there are no lovers and nobody ever sings. How come that three months ago I saw everybody singing in Washington Square, and hundreds of lovers, of both races, walking around together?

Baldwin: Of course, your Washington Square, if I may say so, Colin, is not mine. And you may call that singing in Washington Square, and you may think they're lovers, but I spent years in Washington Square, with those singers and those lovers: they're not singing and that's not love.

MacInnes: Develop that a bit, please. Is it just sex?

Baldwin: It's not even sex; I wish it were. It is a kind of desperate—according to me—a kind of desperate advertising. It's a wistful kind of uniform, so that to sing in Washington Square Park, or to walk around, if you're white, with a black girl, or vice-versa, is a kind of badge of your emancipation.

MacInnes: Is that not a step in the right direction, or is it worse than...?

Baldwin: It seems to me that it would be much better for them to be home with each other, than parading around in public to prove to everyone else, not themselves, how free they are.

Mossman: How can you rebel, then, if that is what they're doing, against the process of dehumanisation in society and the loss of freedom?

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BALDWIN: Unluckily, of course, no matter how you rebel it's got to be awkward, and the people you're speaking about are not middle-aged; they're young. And perhaps the peculiar ways that they go about trying to integrate themselves are the only ways they can find. But in my experience it seems to me that the gesture, the gesture of revolt, becomes all, a substitute for the revolt itself.

MACINNES: You're a very urban writer; all your novels have an urban setting; and yet you've got a hatred of big cities, it seems to me. Is this not right?

BALDWIN: I've a distrust of big cities. I've a distrust of New York which is my big city. Why? ... Well, because I was born there, grew up there. My experience of it, after all, is pretty gloomy; and it is too big. It is one of the loneliest places in the world.

MOSSMAN: Do you think there's any chance that Negroes with their psychology and emotional background would be able to resist this de-humanisation you've written about, this mechanised loss of freedom, more than white men in America?

BALDWIN: The question hasn't really come up. Negroes are so effectively cut out of the mainstream of society, they're so effectively barred from most of the society's temptations.

MOSSMAN: But looking ahead, how would you rate the emotional or psychological resources in the Negro character in America which might come in handy when this pressure gets too big?

BALDWIN: Well, I would like to put it this way: I would like to believe that this is one of the things that will happen, that there is some kind of residue of emotional energy, of passion, of sensuality in the Negro people which will have the power to save an extremely sterile republic. But one can't be sure that the emotional qualities of the Negro people to-day will persist in the future.

MOSSMAN: Are you suggesting that they will—as they get more and more confidence and power in the accepted social sense—that they will take on the attributes of white people, their fears and their pressures?

BALDWIN: It is, unluckily, one of the possibilies, that they will become as faceless as most of the other people in the country.

MACINNES: I don't believe this, you know.

BALDWIN: I don't believe it, either, but it is one of the possibilities.

MOSSMAN: Do you find that you who resist this very consciously are increasingly unpopular with your own people in America?

BALDWIN: Well, let's try to get down to what you mean by one's own people.

MOSSMAN: What do you regard yourself as, to start with?

BALDWIN: Arbitrarily, you know, I'm an American Negro. The word "American" is kind of a conundrum, and the word "Negro" too. In any real sense one's got to assume that my people are the people on the American continent, because the American Negro problem is a kind of invention on the part of white people, which has no validity. One can say, and be perfectly truthful, that in fact there are no whites and no blacks in America, that all of us are mulattos or bastards. It is not a white country. And the only people, for example, who understand Americans at all, the only people in the world who have the least comprehension of what goes on in the American mind and heart are their black brothers and sisters. The great dilemma of being a white American precisely is that they deny their only kinship.

MOSSMAN: But, therefore, I still ask: who are you? You're clearly not an American in the ordinary sense of a White American, are you? You're not an American Negro; that's not an identity, really.

BALDWIN: Then I can't answer it. I'm part of a totally incoherent people at the moment, of African origin, with Indian, Spanish, and European blood in my veins. I'm part of a country which has yet to discover who and what it is.

MACINNES: Well, Jimmy, the last time I saw you (and I think this is relevant) I asked you a question to which you gave me a very sweet but, it seemed to me, slightly equivocal answer. You don't like White racialists and you loathe White Liberals. Where does that leave the rest of us, if there are any rest of us? Are there any rest of us?

BALDWIN: I don't know in which camp you place yourself, Colin.

MACINNES: No camp, please, I'm camp enough as it is.

BALDWIN: I can't stand White Liberals. Obviously I can't stand White Liberals. I don't intend to be converted again.

MOSSMAN: Why? I don't understand that quite.

BALDWIN: White Liberals, in my mind, begin to be frightened of you saying the words any more. I have one thing against White Liberals which is their assumption that their morality and what they take to be civilisation and their religion is something which I need. What I resent is the assumption I must be raised to their level. It seems to me that the only way we can deal with each other as human beings or as social units is to understand that we have to give to each other.

MOSSMAN: If I may say so, in your work you seem to be preoccupied with the idea that the White and the Black in America and the world are locked together in an eternal sort of dance

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of hatred. Is this something you welcome almost as a way of identifying the relationships? It's completely pessimistic.

BALDWIN: I don't think that. I don't think of Whites and Blacks as being locked together in a dance of eternal hatred. We are locked together in a kind of misunderstanding of each other. And I do think that in this kind of dance, as you put it, one is trying—both of us are trying to come closer to something human in each of us. We're afflicted by the terms we use. For example, if one would drop the phrase "Negro," one would understand one was dealing with just human beings, with people.

MACINNES: Well, Jimmy, look, let me take you up on this. Take Whites. A Norwegian can admire a Greek, can't he, and vice versa?

BALDWIN: Yes.

MACINNES: So why shouldn't a white man admire a Negro because he's a Negro? Am I not allowed to admire Negro qualities because Negroes are Negroes? And must I just think Jimmy Baldwin is just a man and not a Negro?

BALDWIN: No, no, no. The only thing that operates between you as an Englishman and I as a black man which doesn't operate necessarily between a Norwegian and a Greek, is that once I worked for you. That when an Englishman or an American white man, in the main, looks at a black man, he is also looking at his own past, and a lot of what happens in the mind and heart of a white man looking at a black man is involved with his guilt, his guilt because I—after all—for nothing, went into the mines and I, for nothing, built the city.

MACINNES: Jimmy, are you sure of this? I'm not sure that it....

BALDWIN: It's a matter of historical record.

MACINNES: Yes, but listen. I don't feel guilty about slavery because three hundred years ago I would have been a slaver. I feel guilty about what my people and I do to-day, but not what happened three hundred years ago.

BALDWIN: Yes, but, Colin, we're not talking necessarily just about you. We're talking about an historical fact—it is also a present fact—which controls the society in which we live. It is one of the reasons that my son, you know, my daughter, or my niece or nephew can't use a White waiting-room in the deep South.

MOSSMAN: But when all that, assuming it's ever settled, is settled, what is the nature of the relationship between a black man and a white man that you consider right—if you despise the Liberal White and equally the racist White, and presumably the racist Black if violence is involved? What is the nature of the relationship you envisage or want?

BALDWIN: I suppose I sound socially irresponsible. I depend very heavily on the mavericks, on the people who in one way or another have managed to liberate themselves from some of the terrors which bind us all. I don't depend, for example, on people in the Churches; I depend on people outside the Churches. The relationship one is trying to establish, hopefully, at least among a few people, as a model and a possibility and as an example for the rest, is simply a human one. Because colour really does not matter, and it doesn't have to be the affliction which it is in so many of our lives for all our lives. There are ways to break out of the nightmare if one is willing to deal with one's self and tell the truth to one's self.

MACINNES: Jimmy, in a certain sense colour does matter. Why is it that I'm attracted by Negroes and not by Indians, for example? Am I not allowed to be? That doesn't mean that I want to oppress people, that I want to be other than equal. I'm willing to work for them. Can I not like them because of colour?

BALDWIN: Of course you can.

MACINNES: Provided it's a free liking?

BALDWIN: Yes.

MACINNES: And not a condescending liking?

BALDWIN: Well, God knows, I'm not trying to set up more barriers than there are already. I like people, you know, who like me. I like people because they're coloured too, and there's something very moving for me in some things I've seen on Lennox Avenue, or on the streets of Freetown—which is not to be found for me in the North of Europe. I think that one's instinct again, I think something in oneself recognises a kind of energy which is sensual, and of the earth, and something one cannot live without, which draws you. We romanticise it, and we lie about it. One has an instinct if one wants to live.

MOSSMAN: Can I go back to the idea that you want to be an example of the way people should be towards each other? How far do you think that this mission, as it were, of being a living example is interfering with or obstructing your work as a creative writer, as a novelist?

BALDWIN: That question keeps coming up and, of course, I may be deluding myself. For me it isn't the real question. It seems to me that life is much more important than art. By which I do not mean that art is not important, but it is only important because life is. And it seems to me that, anyway, given me, I can't hide in a room or a closet and cultivate my talents. I

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would assume that if my talent means anything it has to be tough enough to survive life.

MACINNES: You were very obsessed, I take it, with the case of Richard Wright, were you not? He was, in a sense, your precursor. And in two of your essays, I think you did, unless I misunderstood them, suggest that at a certain point he was an artist and at a certain point he became an emblematic figure. Right? Is there not a certain danger for you in the present context . . . ?

BALDWIN: Oh, yes. . . .

MACINNES: . . . that something might happen? Could you speak about it? There must be demands on you as a—to use a silly phrase—"Negro leader"—that there weren't, say, ten years ago?

BALDWIN: This is true.

MACINNES: Which must inhibit in a certain sense your freedom as a creative artist, no?

BALDWIN: It threatens to. It's a great menace, in many forms, but part of it is the danger of beginning to take yourself seriously, and beginning to quote yourself. And a graver danger when you're before the typewriter, before that blank sheet of paper, to have a kind of audience at your shoulders, invisible of course, saying to you—"What will this do to the cause?" . . .

MOSSMAN: But it's also a relief, perhaps, to leave the typewriter and go to the balcony and make a speech. It's perhaps not, creatively, so difficult?

BALDWIN: I think at one time for me it was a kind of temptation, to tell you the truth. But, in the first place, it's not so easy to go on to the balcony unless of course that's what you want. As it turned out, that isn't what I want. The great terror of public speaking is that you begin to listen to yourself. By and by, since you are always telling people what to think, you begin to forget what you do think. And the moment that happens, of course, it's over. It's over. One's got to be willing, one's got to be able to break it all up, crack it all up, throw it all out, and start all over again as though you'd never learned how to spell C-a-t.

MACINNES: Could we leave for a second the fascinating subjects of religion, politics, and race, and come on to the even more fascinating subject of sex? All writers have a certain sexual pattern, be it heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual. To what extent do you think a writer who may be bisexual or homosexual does identify himself with minority movements in a way a writer who is heterosexual would not? Do you think this plays an important part in the work of a writer of that description?

BALDWIN: Well, now we've really, you know, we've walked into very marshy ground because those terms, homosexual, bisexual, heterosexual are 20th-century terms which, for me, really have very little meaning. I've never, myself, in watching myself and watching other people, watching life, been able to discern exactly where the barriers were. Life being what life is, passion being what passion is. And learning being what that is. It would seem to me that in terms of the tremendous self-consciousness that all of us are afflicted by, this distrust we have of the affections and of the flesh, it's revealed most grotesquely in what we call the sexual deviates, the sexual minorities, who are really, simply the most vivid victims of our system of mortification of the flesh. And in such a desolate place, which is where we all are, it seems to me, the difference between a heterosexual who was miserable with his life and destroys his children and some poor lost creature, thrown out into the outer darkness of our society, it seems to me they are almost—they match each other.

MOSSMAN: You raise two points there. One, I would have thought, that the heterosexual despite his sense of loneliness and misery, as you put it, if he has it, would draw some slight consolation from the fact that he wasn't involved in yet another pressure. And, the other, that the homosexual might draw some curious satisfaction and passion from this clear identity of what he would assume was wrong with him.

BALDWIN: I don't. . . .

MOSSMAN: I mean, in either case is either true?

BALDWIN: Not for me.

MACINNES: No, I don't. . . .

BALDWIN: I don't see it that way at all. It seems to me, in the first place, that if one's to live at all, one's certainly got to get rid of the labels. It seems to me an incredible way to live, to glory in the fact that one is heterosexual because it proves that you're not something else, or vice versa. It seems kind of suicidal. It seems to me that if one is going to deal with this, Colin, at all one's got to get to the root of all these assumptions. Of course, a writer who is bisexual or homosexual is probably but not surely going to identify himself with other minorities, but it's perfectly possible for him to become a fascist or a sadist, too.

MACINNES: Of which we've seen many examples. I'm not positive that the other minorities like particularly being identified with him very often.

BALDWIN: That's true too. In the case of being a Negro or whatever penalty one is paying socially, the only way one can possibly make it less or even endure it at all is to examine the assumptions on which the penalties are based. No one, after all, has the right to judge any-

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body else's life. No one has the right to put himself outside the pale. And if one finds oneself outside the pale one has got to look very hard at the people who think they're safe. I think that your ostracisation makes them safe. That's their delusion.

MOSSMAN: Can I switch to what sounds quite unconnected but isn't, talking of being put outside the pale—the whole matter of immigration into this country of people from the West Indies and other coloured former Colonies? From what you know of the subject, do you approve of controlling those immigrations?

BALDWIN: As far as I know, the question of controlling immigration has never come up until now and applies, therefore, as far as I can tell, only to coloured people. If that's so, then obviously the question of controlled immigration is a question asked essentially in bad faith. The English people, after all, English history, has created these Black Englishmen, who have as much right to the capital as any White Englishman. They've paid quite as much for it as any White Englishman.

MACINNES: Yes. Could I stick up for our country a little bit over this? I mean, what other country has allowed, or encouraged, or admitted, a million coloured people in the last fifteen years and more or less not murdered them? I know landlords slam doors in their faces, I know they get the worse jobs, I know there have been riots (where, incidentally, nobody was killed). But what other country has done that? And behind the scenes there was a tremendous lot of work by rather stupid, well-meaning people trying to receive these people and make things....

BALDWIN: My dear Colin, I'm not trying in any way whatever to denigrate England. I don't know England well enough to be able to do that. In any case, I wouldn't. That's not the question. I understand what you're saying, and I do think as far as that goes, the English record certainly by comparison is honourable—and brave.

MOSSMAN: But supposing the question is there: a principle as to whether people should be stopped coming in, basically on the ground of their colour, because this will create tensions and hatreds. Do you think that is a cowardly way out, or do you think it is acceptable and sensible?

BALDWIN: I think it is not merely a cowardly way out, I think it is ultimately absolutely inefficient since they're going to come anyway. But the problem one is facing....

MACINNES: They're going to come by birth, if nothing else, aren't they?

BALDWIN: Yes, in any case here they are. There is no way effectively to keep them out. Here they are and that means that your societies, all of your societies will have to make room for these people because we have created them and they are here.

MOSSMAN: You've said once, to my great surprise, that America was the most wonderful country in the world. Now that seemed to contradict almost everything else you've ever said or written. How do you account for that grand *cliché*?

BALDWIN: When did I say that?

MOSSMAN: You said it all right, in one of your essays which I was reading only the other day.

MACINNES: Well, whether you said it or not, you do think America's a wonderful country, don't you, Jimmy?

BALDWIN: Yes, of course. It depends what you think I mean by "wonder."

MOSSMAN: I'm asking you.

BALDWIN: "America's the most wonderful country in the world." Well, I could have said it and I could have meant it. Then let me say it now. It is the most wonderful country in the world, it is the most extraordinary collection of ill-assessed motives and undigested history, the most peculiar system of moral evasions and tremendous innocence. There's something very winning and very moving and very beautiful about those lost people who don't yet know that the world is big and complex and dark and that you have to grow up and become yourself big and complex and dark in order to deal with it. Americans still believe they can somehow get through life without ever being corrupted. It is an insane endeavour and, of course, this is where the Negro comes in. The Negro, by his presence, being on the bottom, affords society almost the only coherence that it has. Since white people in the main cannot grow up our children must grow up by the time they're ten.

MOSSMAN: Why does being at the bottom give coherence?

BALDWIN: That means if I'm on the bottom and you can see me there, that means that you are not.

MOSSMAN: If you've got something worse than you, you feel less "chaotic," is that it?

BALDWIN: Yes. A poor white man in the deep South knows only one thing. This one thing that he knows has destroyed the labour movement in the deep South and almost in the country. The one thing that he knows is that he's White.

MOSSMAN: Do you think you will be chaotic as well when you're not at the bottom?

BALDWIN: Well, in my own case, you know, I....

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Norman Mailer

NORMAN MAILER declared himself a contender five years ago. "The sour truth," he wrote in *Advertisements For Myself*, "is that I am imprisoned with a perception which will settle for nothing less than making a revolution in the consciousness of our time."

Advertisements, on balance, was an unfortunate but crucial book, for it indicated that Mailer, his last two novels brutally handled by some critics, had assumed a risky stance, teetering on a parapet thirty stories up (like Steve Rojack in *An American Dream*?) between two incompatible camps. The glittering and feverish one of gossip columnists and best-seller charts and the office of a serious writer. At the time, it seemed that he could still fall either way. *Advertisements* was a compulsively readable, but often embarrassing compilation of stories and articles and gossip that assumed—at its own peril—that we were as absorbed in Mailer as he was in himself. All the same, the book did establish three things.

1. Mailer had the ability, but too much pride and ambition, to follow his first big success with another naturalistic novel, or as he put it, *The Naked And The Dead Go To Japan.*

2. There was a superb short novel in the collection, *The Man Who Studied Yoga*, which suggested that Mailer just might break through, as advertised. In fact as he and Cassius Clay ridiculed rivals and hustled in pursuit of different championship belts it seemed that it was Clay who was all bluff, but that Mailer might do the trick.

3. Mailer was hooked on a dangerous Hemingway-cum-Jewish problem. Of Hemingway, he wrote:

> Let any of you decide for yourself how silly would be *A Farewell To Arms* or better, *Death In the Afternoon*, if it had been written by a man who was five-four, had acne, wore glasses, spoke in a shrill voice, or was a physical coward. That, of course, is an impossible hypothesis.

Impossible? Well, Isaac Babel, for one, wore glasses and looked to be about five-four, yet his stories of the Red Cavalry were as splendid and somewhat less sentimental than anything Hemingway ever wrote.

Then there was the two-fisted *début* in *The Time of Her Time*, an excerpt from a projected novel, of Mailer's prototype Super-Goy. Sergius O'Shaugnessy, a six-foot-plus Irishman ("girls and ladies would try me on off-evenings like comparison shoppers to shop the value of their boy-friend, lover, mate, or husband, against the certified professionalism of Sergius O'Shaugnessy"), who was a former trapper in Alaska, chauffeur to gangsters, officer in the Foreign Legion, labour organiser, and analyst ... and who sounded ominously like the fantasy of somebody who was five-four, had acne, spoke in a shrill voice, etc., etc. Anyway, in the sexual main bout of *The Time of Her Time*, Sergius takes on a little Jewish dumpling who hitherto was unable to have an orgasm and leads her over the mountain by telling her at the crucial moment, "You're a dirty little Jew."[1]

Following *Advertisements* there came *Deaths For The Ladies (and other disasters)*, a book of poems in which Mailer seemed to be making engaging fun of himself.

> *If*
> *Harry Golden*
> *is the gentile's*
> *Jew*
> *can I be-*
> *come the Golden*
> *Goy?*

But he also appeared to be committing himself even more irretrievably to becoming another wowser on the scene, a personality, rather than a working writer. That is to say, I doubt that the poems ever would have been published had they not been written by a celebrity.

THEN, ONLY LAST YEAR, along came *The Presidential Papers*, another compilation, with one redeeming stunning piece (on the Patterson-Liston fight) and rather more hard-sell advertisements. The book was written with "the idea that the President might come to read it" but, on publication, Kennedy had already been assassinated. In the *Papers*, Mailer wrote:

> Jack Kennedy won the election by one hundred thousand votes.... So I came to the cool conclusion I had won the election for Kennedy with my piece in *Esquire* (*Superman Comes to the Supermarket*), the thought might be high presumption, but it was not unique. I had done something curious but indispensable for the campaign—succeeded in making it dramatic.

[1] There are, incidentally, two variations on this theme in *An American Dream*. After murdering his wife, Steve Rojack opens the door to the German maid's room, finds her masturbating on the bed, buggers her, and tells her, "You're a Nazi."

"'*Ja.*' She shook her head. 'No, no,' she went on. '*Ja*, don't stop. *Ja.*'" Later the maid says, "'Mr. Rojack, I do not know why you have trouble with your wife. You are absolutely a genius, Mr. Rojack.'"

Cherry, Rojack's next love of the same long night, votes the same sex ticket. A night-club singer who has been ravished in the past by Bugsy Seigal, boxers, hoodlums, fabled Negro entertainers and millionaires, she says to Rojack, "... it happened with you. I had an orgasm with you. I was never able to before."

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Between books Mailer had run for Mayor of New York and had been the subject of a piece in *Esquire* by James Baldwin. "...our styles are very different," Baldwin wrote, "I am a black boy from the Harlem streets, and Norman is a middle-class Jew....I hope I do not need to say no sneer is implied in the above description of Norman." He continued: "Negro musicians...who really liked Norman did not for an instant consider him as being even remotely 'hip.' . . . They thought he was a real sweet ofay cat, but a little frantic." Baldwin suggested that the trouble between Mailer and himself was "the toughest kid on the block meeting the toughest kid on the block."

The rumble did not end there. Soon the Original Original Toughest Kid On The Block was heard from: Nelson Algren. In *Who Lost An American*, he wrote, "A fellow wearing a sandwich-board advertising himself approached me. 'I am Norman Manlifellow,' he introduced himself, sheathing a nine-inch jack-knife, 'Hemingway never wrote anything that would disturb an eight-year-old.'" And still later. "'I'm a writer, *not* a performer,' he [Manlifellow] explained...and thereupon stood on his head; revealing, as his trousers slipped to his knees, that one of his socks bore the legend, 'Look at me!' and the other the plea, '*Keep* looking!'"

While the toughest kids on the block were brawling under an *Esquire* street lamp, the men were sitting inside writing novels. Like *Herzog*.

AND NOW MAILER HAS published his first novel in nine years, *An American Dream*. "He wrote it at high pitch," according to the blurb, "each chapter appearing in *Esquire*, while he was still at work on the next: a method now unusual but common enough among the great novelists of the 19th century, which contributed much to the quivering tension of the story." The novel got off to a bad critical start. On Sunday, April 25th, John Coleman wrote in the *Observer*, "...it's appallingly awful, bad and embarrassing in self-indulgent ways one isn't used to seeing out there in print." Cyril Connolly was more magnanimous in the *Sunday Times*. He found the first few pages "superbly written," but "about page 165 the rot sets in and from 200 to the end I found the going difficult. One can sum up that he proves himself a novelist even if he hasn't written a very good novel. He must try again."

Six o'clock the same evening Mailer spoke at London's May Fair Theatre. Once more you had to admire his courage, but regret his recklessness. There were more than 300 people in the theatre, an audience that included critics, other novelists, editors, and playwrights. Sympathisers. "A frightfully hip audience," the insufferably smart John Crosby wrote in the *Herald Tribune*, "that included people like Jonathan Miller, Ken Tynan, bevies of beautiful girls with long blonde hair, carefully ironed in the latest fashion. A sprinkling of Negroes, and all three sexes." The *Sun* ran a story under the headline, HOW CAN THESE PEOPLE BE SO STUPID? The report described Mailer as "a fleshy Chico Marx" and quoted the chairman, Malcolm Muggeridge, as saying Mailer was "a moralist with this intense loathing that all decent people must feel for the Twentieth Century," adding its own comment: "Right. And there is no aspect of the Twentieth Century that should attract more intense loathing than a bunch of highly articulate, talented, sensitive, intelligent people exhibiting such crass stupidity in public. And gloating at their wisdom." The *Evening Standard*, on the other hand, felt it was an "excellent entertainment. . . . Anyone looking for a wild advocate of violence was certainly disappointed. Endearing is not an unfair description." But the most tender account was written by Terry Coleman for the *Guardian*. "He has a presence," he wrote. "He is a sympathetic man." But Coleman felt *An American Dream* was "nasty, brutish, and long."

> How can he do this? How can he talk like a Puritan, so evidently concerned, and then write like Hank Janson? He can write so strongly and well. *The Deer Park*, so much abused, is a fine novel: the sympathy between his characters is plain, and between his characters and himself. But it seems *The Deer Park* is not Hollywood any longer. It isn't Mailer, either.

Mailer began by promising us a definition of existentialism, which he never quite got around to. He spoke with regret for the eighteenth century when society was orderly and the British Navy and the orgasm were both going good; and then he remembered to put in a word for the folks in Alaska who live in a heroic relation to nature. He was, like most of us, against the piggish rich and for an end to the war in Viet Nam. He made some perceptive remarks about the split-personality of minority group men. He complained about the shrinking purchase power of the pound and the decline of craftsmanship, ugly architecture, greedy doctors, and high taxation, sounding uncannily like J. B. Priestley in one of those "Notes From The Wilderness" he used to write for the *New Statesman*.

It was inchoate, but charming, for Mailer is certainly an engaging man. When he smiles his whole face rumples; it is suffused by the most infectious warmth. Then pulling at his ear lobe, making a fist, discovering it with something like admiration, he told us that we were living through a sexual revolution. Sex, once so

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ring-a-ding, had been corrupted by the search for status, and now Mailer felt that all the cool cats in the house had to be brave in bed. He also seemed to think that promiscuity was a *malaise* peculiar to the twentieth century.

By this time I held Mailer in a double-vision. I could hear the self-inflated, innocent programmist going on and on about a Sexual Revolution, but what I saw was a warm chunky man of forty-two who was really saying that screwing to-day wasn't nearly as satisfying as when he was a kid and that, like the rest of us, he suffered sourness and insults in and out of bed, and wasn't it a shame, a bloody shame.

Afterwards, outside the May Fair Hotel, it seemed that nearly everybody was making condescending jokes, shaking their heads, and feeling sorry for Mailer. I can remember being angry because at first there was a sort of ugly self-satisfaction that I felt and sensed in others around me. There goes Mailer, rich and famous, unlike you and I, but what a goddamn fool. Then I recall feeling depressed because it was this kind of exhibition which gave licence to modish newspaper columnists to poke fun at a man who has, remember, written brilliantly on occasion.

It was similar to the let-down I felt after seeing *The World of Paul Slickey*, John Osborne's wild attack on Fleet Street gossip columnists, so inaccurate and badly-conceived as ultimately to give pleasure to its odious target. It was why, on balance, the B.B.C.'s *"Not So Much A Programme"* was *that* infuriating. Too many of the attacks mounted were so loaded and juvenile as to fortify persons and institutions we had abhorred before tuning-in.

AND WHAT, THEN, of *An American Dream* itself? If the man we saw on stage at the May Fair Theatre was "mild Clark Kent" then it was his alter-ego, Superman, who flies in the fiction. Rojack, like O'Shaugnessy before him, is a man of stunning accomplishments. "The one intellectual in America's history with a D.S.C." He is also a famous TV personality and the author of *The Psychology of the Hangman*. In an opening calculated to prevent you from switching channels, Rojack informs the reader, "I met Jack Kennedy in November 1946. We were both war heroes, and had just been elected to Congress...."

The story, if you are not already familiar with it, begins with Rojack murdering his rich bitch wife after a quarrel; then he takes the German maid and throws his wife's body out on to the street. At the police station, Rojack outmanoeuvres the cops; he meets a Mafia gangster and Cherry, a gorgeous night-club singer. Rojack and Cherry make love after he has proven he has *cojones* by standing up to some thugs in the night-club. Then Rojack out-talks the cops again and puts down Shago Martin (a famous Negro entertainer and Cherry's previous lover) and makes love to Cherry again. Finally, Rojack comes face to face with Oswald Kelly, his dead wife's step-father and something of a "Daddy Warbucks" figure. For Kelly's sake, Rojack walks a wind-swept parapet thirty stories above Manhattan. Cherry dies. Then Rojack goes to Las Vegas, picks up more than twenty-four thousand dollars at the dice tables, stops at a phone booth and rings Cherry in heaven. "...the girls are swell," Cherry says. "Marilyn says to say hello."

This is not so much fiction as a comic-strip fantasy. Rojack not only deals out first orgasms to lucky girls but is congratulated on his manhood wherever he wanders. The cops end up admiring him, Shago Martin tells him he has *valour*, and you feel that even Kelly wants to hug him. While Rojack is with Kelly, the phone rings. " 'It was Jack,' he said to me. 'He said to send you his regards and commiserations....I didn't know you knew him.' " Rojack's wife, it turns out, was a C.I.A. agent. So, possibly, is Ruta. Maybe Cherry too.

An American Dream, as John Coleman, Christopher Ricks, and Al Alvarez have already written, is a big bad book, a novel so obviously appalling, that after reading what they had to say I re-read the book, hoping to find a hidden vein of genius somewhere. If it's there, it eluded me. The one outstanding virtue of *An American Dream* is a solid, old-fashioned one. Mailer, though he now has a weakness for windy passages, still has an astonishing narrative skill. When he wants to tell a story he tells it very well indeed. (The scenes in the police station are first-rate.)

Or have we all missed the point and is *An American Dream* meant to be a comic strip extension of reality? The first pop novel? If so, it's still sub-standard.

In *Advertisements For Myself* Mailer wrote:

> "...for years he [Hemingway] has not written anything which would bother an eight-year-old or one's grandmother....Hemingway has always been afraid to think, afraid of losing even a little popularity, and so to-day he clowns away his time worrying publicly about the feud between his good friends Leonard Lyons and Walter Winchell, and his words excite no thought in the best of my rebel generation. He's no longer any help to us, he's left us marooned in the nervous boredom of a world which finally he didn't try hard enough to change.

It's still too early to write off Norman Mailer. One still hopes he will stop clowning and settle

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down to the book he has talked about for so many years. If he does have a perception that will settle for nothing less than making a revolution in the consciousness of our time then the sour truth is he is still imprisoned with it.

Mordecai Richler

Letter from France

Duel in the Sun

"THE PERFECT SETTING for a detective story," someone remarked at this year's Prix Formentor conference, which was held in splendid isolation among the hills above St. Raphaël, in a hotel surrounded by miles of pine-wood and golf-course. It was easy to see what he meant, easy to visualise Hercule Poirot summoning the decimated house-party to the lounge for the denouement of *The Formentor Murders*. All the ingredients were there, certainly: contrasting personalities, tangled motives, plots and counter-plots, two $10,000 prizes to be collected. But in the event, the atmosphere was anything but murderous. Compared with what one had heard about former Formentors, all was sweetness (more or less) and light (on the whole). There were no prima donnas to be placated, very few tantrums, no walk-outs or ideological scraps.

A tranquil gathering, then, but an industrious one as well—not quite the prolonged *mardi gras* depicted in some popular papers. For a literary conference, indeed, the proceedings were positively business-like. (Perhaps it was something in the air, the lingering influence of previous guests who had left their copies of *L'Usine Moderne* and *L'Année Boursière* lying around.) The level of debate was fairly elevated, too. For a moment one wondered whether an ominous keynote hadn't inadvertently been struck when a delegate, speaking in French, announced that she would have to fall back on a *mot anglais—intraduisible*—to suggest the peculiar quality of the author whom she was commending: "piffle." But as it turned out, there was very little downright piffling, and a good deal of intelligent discussion.

Neither good-will nor sobriety damped down the competitive spirit, of course. An event like Formentor is calculated to make bookmen speak the language of bookmakers, and one kept hearing about front runners and dark horses and starting odds. The favourite all along was Saul Bellow's *Herzog*, both on account of its intrinsic merits and because of a general feeling that it was high time that a Formentor prize went to an English-language work. The Italians and French, who have tended to dominate previous conferences, were not pushing their claims very hard, and there was no one obvious rival to *Herzog* from anywhere else. But the book did have its detractors, and the main point of interest, "politically" speaking, was to see how soon the divided opposition could be persuaded to band together behind a single anti-*Herzog* candidate, and which one they would choose.

Bellow's staunchest support came from the Anglo-Dutch-Canadian National Jury. It may be asked how a jury can be both national and Anglo-Dutch-Canadian at the same time, but such was the oxymoronic device under which the British delegates went into battle—although as a matter of fact there were no Canadians, and the team was led by Mary McCarthy (also doubling as chairman of the entire conference). Miss McCarthy singled out Bellow's style for special praise, but at the opening session she concentrated on a sparkling tribute to Ivy Compton-Burnett. Last year's Formentor winner, Nathalie Sarraute, is a great admirer of Miss Compton-Burnett, but no one gave her much of a chance. The Anglo-Dutch-Canadians decided to keep her name in front of the conference at least during its early stages, however, and they received some totally unexpected support from one of the Italian delegates, Professor Manganelli of the University of Rome. A *manganello* is a cudgel, but the professor was the least bludgeoning of orators. Instead, he spoke in beautifully measured epigrammatic sentences, extolling the formal perfection, "like the heraldic design on a shield," which he found in the work of "this pensive lady." He asked to be tantalised by a novel, not instructed or uplifted—"a thing of ambiguity is a joy for ever"—and he damned *Herzog* with strong praise by saying that he was afraid that it had had an improving effect upon him. It was the most unpredictable intervention of the conference—subtle, dead-pan, and wholly delightful—but it wasn't intended to sway the electorate.

MEANWHILE, THE SERIOUS contenders were beginning to sort themselves out. Two Latin American names, Julio Cortazar and Joao Guimaraes Rosa, were widely canvassed; so was that of the Japanese novelist Yukio Mishima, who once again found a doughty champion in Professor Donald Keene. Max Frisch bobbed up and disappeared, not before being compared and contrasted at length with Bellow by a

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magisterial Hans Mayer. The really unknown quantity, however, was the Swedish novel *Expeditionen*, by Per Olaf Sundman, which was presented with great force and charm by Michel Butor, who has also written a preface to the French translation. (The Scandinavians themselves, though naturally behind Sundman, were more persuasive on the subject of Villy Sørensen's macabre parables.) *Expeditionen*, based on the records of H. M. Stanley's African explorations and told alternately from the points of view of an enigmatic Oriental and an imaginary European, is an examination of perceptual modes and habitual assumptions about experience, but Francis Wyndham, who made a telling case against it, suggested that it was too clumsy for what it had set out to do, and that Butor had read his own subtlety into it.

Resistance to Bellow, though unfocused, proved surprisingly strong. Perhaps his supporters underplayed their hand, or were so confident about the power and originality of *Herzog* that they were prepared to be unduly and undiplomatically apologetic about its shortcomings. Certainly they were made to feel that its virtues were too obvious, and too traditional, that its very richness was a drawback. The phrase which seemed to re-echo, by way of introduction to one after another of *Herzog*'s experimental or *avant-garde* rivals, was "*C'est presque banal*, MAIS . . . ," and speakers managed to imply that it was somehow tactless of Bellow not at any rate to go through the motions of being banal. Various misconceptions about his book were floating about, too: opponents made it sound more "affirmative" than it really is, missed out on the ironies, talked about it as though it were a great naturalistic urban sprawl of a novel, without doing anything like justice to Bellow's inventiveness and sheer artistry. There was also, more understandably, a reluctance to bestow an additional wreath on the brow where so many rested already, when there was a chance of giving the prize to the kind of author who can never hope to be as widely acclaimed as Bellow (although in fact, in Europe at least, he still hasn't acquired anything like the reputation which he deserves).

Eventually the Bellovians managed to speak up and give fuller vent to their enthusiasm. But they had left it dangerously late, and by this time the opposition had fixed on their man, the Polish *émigré* Witold Gombrowicz, on the basis of his novel *La Pornographie*. (The title is deliberately provocative, and not to be taken literally, although according to François Bondy, who did some agile pleading for both Bellow and Gombrowicz during the closing stages of the conference, one of its qualities is "micro-eroticism.") In each of the final votes Gombrowicz was backed by three of the seven juries, but after some dithering and delay Bellow got his absolute majority. After it was all over there were one or two subversive mutterings down by the swimming-pool about "cultural imperialism" (no doubt reinforced by the fact that the prize for the best unpublished novel had also gone to an American work, Stephen Schneck's *Night-clerk*). But the general feeling, even among the opposition, was that the right man had won. It had been a damn close-run thing, though, and no doubt it would have given Moses Elkanah Herzog himself something to write home about.

J.G.

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William Carlos Williams

By Thom Gunn

AT ONE TIME it must have seemed as if T. S. Eliot and William Carlos Williams[1] had divided between them the gifts of their friend Ezra Pound—Eliot taking the polish of *Mauberley*, the emphasis on a constantly shifting and mysterious tone, the sense of dislocated internal drama, and Williams taking the wistful sentiment of *Cathay*, the emphasis on the image, and the concern for clear delineation of the external world. Though this would be an over-simplification, it is true that they did originally share a common meeting-place in Pound, the potentiality of each being strengthened by this man who, both in his own poetry and in that of his friends, was the originator of what we uncomfortably call Modernism.

Yet because the gifts they took were so different they developed in decisively different directions. Williams, in fact, soon came to see Eliot as the Enemy. In his *Autobiography* he speaks of *The Waste Land* as "the great catastrophe to our letters," and elsewhere he says of *Prufrock*: "I had a violent feeling that Eliot had betrayed what I believed in. He was looking backward; I was looking forward...I felt he had rejected America."

Williams had his mystique of what is American and what isn't, but as a gloss we may take his prose book of 1925, *In the American Grain*. America is here seen as a New World in spirit as well as in fact: most of the colonists made the great mistake of attempting to understand it and even remould it only in terms of the Old, America being "a living flame" compared to the "dead ash" of England. But there were some who had the ability to see what was there: Daniel Boone, for instance, who found in the wilderness a "power to strengthen every form of energy that would be voluptuous, passionate, possessive in that place which he opened"; or the Père Rasles, for whom "nothing shall be ignored. All shall be included." Such attitudes Williams considers necessary to the American poet, and he sees Eliot as denying them by the very completeness of his achievement. Eliot is the American poet who has acquired an "English" detachment, turning to the dry ash of European subject matter, ignoring the new terms that even now must be found for the interpretation and continuation of a New World, and rejecting what Williams came to call the American idiom. Williams was apt to restate his thesis so hastily that it sometimes becomes mere anti-intellectualism, but in its most careful definition it was not so: it embodied a desire that the unknown and unexpressed should not be treated in terms of the already known and expressed.

THE DESIRE TAKES FORM in Williams' work not as a programme, but as something more important, an exploration. It is true that he was, early on, an Imagist, and he presumably subscribed to Pound's somewhat fuzzily expressed programme for Imagism. But Imagism merely overlapped with the inclinations of Williams himself. He was in love with the bare fact of the external world, its thinginess; and the love mastered him for a lifetime.

In his early poem, "Tract," he rejected the rituals of the past, and he came more and more to realise that his subject matter lay in the present, and had to be defined without the help of other than what it is. And as much of it had to be defined as possible. "Nothing shall be ignored. All shall be included." His love for the external world led him to search for ways of incorporating more and more of it into his poetry. This search is the preoccupation of any good writer, particularly when he is starting to write, and moreover it is fully in accord with an American literary tradition; but for

[1] *Collected Earlier Poems* (New York, New Directions, 1951). *Collected Later Poems* (New York, New Directions, 1963 and London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1965). *Autobiography* (New York, Random House, 1951). *In the American Grain* (New York, New Directions, 1925). *Paterson*, Vols. 1–5 (New York, New Directions, 1946–1958, and London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1964). *Pictures from Breughel and Other Poems* (New York, New Directions, 1962, and London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1964).

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Williams it was the central fact of his poetry, accounting for his greatest successes and worst failures. He was delighted by what he saw at the Armory Show of 1913:

> I went to it and gaped along with the rest at a "picture" in which an electric bulb kept going on and off; at Duchamp's sculpture (by "Mott and Co."), a magnificent cast iron urinal, glistening in its white enamel.

In much the same way he was later to include in poems such unmodified "objects" as the label of a poison-bottle, with skull and crossbones, or a line of Keats. He was to find perfectly proper subject matter in the wallpaper of a room or in a "lovely ad." More important, he became increasingly concerned with the attempt to reproduce and recreate the rhythms and language of speech—something we can see he succeeded in doing better than any other poet of the century, if we compare the style of "The Raper from Passenack" with Pound's curious dialects or the embarrassing pub scene from *The Waste Land*. By so incorporating the things of the New World you can realise a new world of poetry: you become like Boone or Rasles among the Indians of wild Kentucky or Maine.

SUCH WAS the emphasis he made, as a writer. We, as readers, may consider that we do not need to make such an emphasis—the acts of exploration and incorporation are made once they are made, and what should continue to interest us is the recorded manner in which they are performed. But we would be missing something important if we merely noted how quickly he eliminated the exclamatory romanticism of his earliest style, and did not also note the romanticism of feeling that remained once that elimination had been made (a feeling Wallace Stevens characterised as "sentimental"—in a favourable sense), and that derived from his love, a romantic love, for the subject of his poem.

In such a poem as "The Red Wheelbarrow," for example, the whole point is in the fact that he has written it, that he has bothered to record with fidelity and economy a phenomenon of the external world. Of the sixteen words in the poem, only the first four, "So much depends/ upon," are suggestive of explanation. And so we have to look into the impulse behind the writing of the poem if we wish to speak about its meaning. Indeed, what "depends" on such a perception if not everything, man's power to perceive the world? But Williams was not content with writing only this kind of poem. This, and the perhaps even finer "Poem" of ten years later, describing how a cat jumps over a jam-closet, are legitimate extensions of a particular mode, and perhaps they are more purely Imagist than any of the original works of the Imagists. But as a mode it is limited by the very wideness of its implication, and Williams was aiming at other things as well, in which the technique of description is combined with direct or indirect comment.

"The Red Wheelbarrow" appears in *Spring and All*, a sequence of twenty-eight poems originally mixed with prose when it was published in 1923. In it Williams has reached a full and confident maturity, and a few of the poems must rank among the best in the language. The sureness of direction and the grasp of subject matter seem to result from his decision about the role of the poet, which is defined in the third poem with a firmness in strong contrast to the slight whimsicality of such earlier poems touching the subject as "Sub Terra" or "To a Solitary Disciple" or to the later uneasiness of *Paterson*. Here the farmer walking through the rainswept fields in March, meditating on "the harvest already planted," is seen explicitly as the artist composing. He is also called an "antagonist," (a word to be taken in both senses, I think, since he is both the antagonist in his work of art and the antagonist to disorder). The poet organises, plants, and meditates on what he has planted, "in deep thought." In spite of a hint at the organicism of art, a hint that is undeveloped, the poet could as well be from the seventeenth century as from the twentieth.

IT IS THE GREATER certainty about his role that accounts for the success of Williams' structural experimentation in this sequence. One of his main concerns seems to be with the ways in which you can go beyond Imagism without abandoning its virtues. How do you not only incorporate things on their own terms (as he does with the red wheelbarrow) but also convey what you conceive to be their value? How, in fact, should meaning enter the poem? On the one hand there is Imagism, where (I have suggested) meaning is to be found in the impulse that causes the poem to be written rather than in the words themselves; and on the other there is general statement, where the poet explicitly *tells* us what value the images have for him. Williams was not, as we might expect, opposed to statement: in spite of the Imagist training he was never to forget completely, he was not afraid of reproducing the content as well as the shape of experience, and the reproduction of content usually takes the form of statement. Between image and statement there is, of course, metaphor: he had indeed earlier experimented with the possibilities of the poem as extended metaphor in "To Waken an Old Lady" and the more complex "The Widow's Lament in

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Springtime," but though these are successful, if rather fragile poems, he had now come to see such direct metaphor as an evasion of the bareness of reality, which is merely itself, without recourse to comparisons.

The most successful resolution to his problem is the title poem, "Spring and All," which looks at first sight like description and only that, and certainly lacks any element of direct discourse. It is about the appearance of leaves at the beginning of spring. Williams was much preoccupied with the image of buds or leaves on a branch. They grow with that peculiar combination of un-self-aware vitality and vulnerability that he values so much; in many of his poems there are sexual connotations to his descriptions of them, when he speaks of their "thrust," or of the buds "erect with desire against the sky," or of the leafless beech-tree that "seems to glow/of itself/with a soft stript light/of love. But in this poem the associations are not sexual. Indeed at first sight there seem to be no associations at all: the things in it are subtly and accurately and decisively *there*, and the poem seems to be about them and them only.

> *They enter the new world naked,*
> *cold, uncertain of all*
> *save that they enter. All about them*
> *the cold, familiar wind—*
>
> *Now the grass, tomorrow*
> *the stiff curl of wildcarrot leaf*

Yet because of the feeling behind the poem, which is far deeper and more complex than that behind "The Red Wheelbarrow," and which is here the sum of numerous hints at feeling in the words themselves, one is moved by the appearance of the leaves: any generalisations about the act of self-definition, of entrance into a cold world, are made by oneself after finishing the poem, but one inevitably makes them. A perfect accuracy of description, by means of which the world is both mastered and lived in, becomes thus a moral perception.

Elsewhere in the sequence are poems in which moral perception is explicit, as general statement —in "At the Ball Game," where it is as frank as in a poem by Matthew Arnold, in "Horned Purple," where it is overcome and superseded by the images, and in "To Elsie," where it is used in correlation with the images. The three poems together constitute a fresh incorporation of material for Williams, sociological in kind, each being about a class of people rather than an individual. "To Elsie" is the most ambitious. It consists of two very long sentences followed by three short ones.

In the first, generalisation moves into more and more limited generalisation—almost like a

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camera panning in from all America to New Jersey, to particular types of people in New Jersey, and finally to one type, the "young slatterns" who are seduced,

> *. . . succumbing without*
> *emotion*
> *saved numbed terror*
> *under some hedge of choke-cherry*
> *or viburnum—*
> *which they cannot express*

At this momentary point of rest there is both an implicit comparison between the girls and the hedge-plants, which "cannot express" either, and an implicit contrast, for the hedge-plants have no terror to express. The second sentence starts with a continued limitation of the generalisation until we are shown a particular girl, Elsie, the help in Williams' house; but the instance is not to be a culmination of the process, as it at first appears: it is used as the basis for the largest statement of all, for Elsie embodies a truth about the rest of us:

> *as if the earth under our feet*
> *were*
> *an excrement of some sky*
> *and we degraded prisoners*
> *destined*
> *to hunger until we eat filth*
> *while the imagination strains*
> *after deer*
> *going by fields of goldenrod in*
> *the stifling heat of September.*

The deer and the goldenrod are related to the choke-cherry and viburnum, those things that are complete from lacking consciousness and the needs imposed by even the inarticulate consciousness of an Elsie. Elsie is merely the extreme example of our helplessness in a state where there is "no one to drive the car," where we are left at the side of the highway at the mercy of ourselves. It is a poem that might have been no more than an exercise in sentimental pessimism, but the generality of feeling that dominates it is securely held down to the ground by guy-ropes of precise statement, which in turn are pegged there by precise images.

After *Spring and All*, Williams published no poetry in book form for some years, but when he did so again in the early 1930s he continued to write poems clearly springing from the same image of the poet as source of control. In "The Sea Elephant," "The Bull," "New England," "View of a Lake," "The Raper from Passenack," and "Fine Work with Pitch and Copper," the only new tendency to be discerned is that he attempts more often to exploit the rhythms of direct speech. In technique these poems and those from *Spring and All* have little to do with the post-Symbolist tradition as developed by Yeats, Stevens, Crane, Eliot, or Pound. They make use, as Yvor Winters has pointed out in his discussion of "Spring and All," of traditional methods alternating with or strengthened by an Imagist discipline. Their distinction is not only in the excellence of the writing, but in the feeling served by such methods, a feeling "possessive in that place" which Williams opens.

IT IS LATER that a change becomes apparent. In spite of its title, the *Collected Later Poems* is chronologically the second of the four collections of Williams' poetry published (the *Earlier* is not yet available in England), and includes his shorter work of the 1940s. Considering it covers only ten years' work, it is surprisingly long; it is also surprisingly dull. The book contains a small number of fairly good poems, and numerous echoes of earlier successes, but many of them are spoiled by the presence of moralising personal assertions, and the tone is often rather tired and hurried, possibly because during this period the best of Williams was going into *Paterson*.

Paterson is the long poem on which he started work in the 1930s. It was planned as four books: the fourth was published in 1951, but a fifth—something of an afterthought—came out in 1958. Each Book is divided into three sections. Paterson is a town in New Jersey, but the poem is also about a man called Paterson—the town is to be seen in terms of a man, the man in terms of a town—and it becomes clearer and clearer as it progresses that the man is Williams himself. The intention was that each Book of the poem should treat of a stage in the course of the river that runs through Paterson, and at the same time of the interrelated aspects of life and poetry suggested to Williams by the activity of the river. The ideas were to emerge from the physical things themselves: the repeated slogan of the poem is "no ideas but in things," and the first lines make a modest enough announcement of what sounds like inductive method:

> *To make a start*
> *out of particulars*
> *and make them general, rolling*
> *up the sum, by defective means—*

But in the result ideas tend less to exist in or emerge from things than to alternate with them. There is symbolic and even allegorical writing, there is exact description; there are sustained passages of verse, there are isolated half-lines; there are pieces of prose by Williams, and there are extracts (many of them quite long) from old newspapers, documents, and private letters addressed to Williams. In using material from the past, Williams does not repeat the triumph

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of *In the American Grain*, where he was prepared to take the past on what he saw as its own terms, living through its style so intensely that it becomes for the time being another kind of present. Instead, he has here turned, surprisingly and disappointingly, to the Poundian technique of fragmentary juxtaposition, particularly between the past and the present. The direct influence of the *Cantos* on *Paterson* is very clear, not only in the structure but even at times in the ideas (talk of credit, etc.) and in the style (the passage starting "without invention" appears to be a very successful imitation of Pound's "with usura," for example). And, since the structure is largely thematic, with little assistance from narrative or logical methods, it is as apparent as in the *Cantos* that there is going to be a good deal of waste involved, and that what satisfaction we get will be local rather than from the work as a whole. Williams did print some of the best passages separately before their inclusion in *Paterson*, and reprinted others after, and so in fact we may feel a certain justification in making our own anthology of extracts, as we do with the *Cantos*.

In the early Books, the Falls of the river are established as a symbol of primitive energy. Williams finds the present lacking, and it is so specifically because language has undergone a "divorce" from that energy. The poem is an attempt to examine the ways in which we are divorced and the ways in which we are still "married" to it.

MOST READERS AGREE that the quality of the writing declines during the course of the poem, and the common assumption is that it does so after Book II, but I find the good poetry in greatest concentration in the second section of Book III. The Book as a whole is entitled "The Library," and its subject is the relation between books and life. From the start of the first section there is an intermittent evocation of "Beautiful thing," first seen as a blossoming locust tree, and then merging into a girl in a white lace dress, possibly a bride, and certainly the victim of assault. We may be helped in identifying her by bearing in mind the prose sentences at the beginning of Book I: "Rigour of beauty is the quest. But how will you find beauty when it is locked in the mind past all remonstrance?" She is like the budded branch, or the "blameless beasts," and she has the

dazzled half sleepy eyes
Beautiful thing
of some trusting animal.

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itself if they can be allowed to live free on their own terms—not locked in, and not raped.

The first twelve pages of the second section are about the workings of Fire. The image is associated with the process of writing:

> *They have*
> *manoeuvred it so that to write*
> *is a fire and not only of the blood.*

Fire is destructive. There is an account of an Indian fire-rite, in "a place hidden from/affection, women and offspring," where, "in the tobacco hush," the Indians lie "huddled (a huddle of books)," books being further interpreted as "men in hell,/their reign over the living ended." There follow prose accounts of fires in towns. Fire destroys even Sappho's poems. But fire also transforms:

> *An old bottle, mauled by the fire*
> *gets a new glaze, the glass warped*
> *to a new distinction, reclaiming the*
> *undefined.*

The fire as it advances, consuming, takes on a power which recalls that of the imagination. It becomes like the Falls of the river, but "a cataract reversed." And at times, Beautiful thing is glimpsed through the fire, but it is difficult to know at this point whether she is apart from the flames or of the flames—though she is seen once "intertwined" with them, suggesting the subject of poetry intertwined with the process of writing, and we are finally told that she is "the flame's lover."

Most of the description of the fire's advance is very vivid, but the explanation supplied by the discursive elements is often unclear; partly, I think, because Williams is no longer content with the image of the poet as farmer, and has become genuinely uncertain about the value of his writing, as we can tell from the following rather clumsy lines:

> *nothing is so unclear, between man and*
> *his writing, as to which is the man and*
> *which the thing and of them both which*
> *is the more to be valued.*

Books are valueless, he goes on to say, if they contain "nothing of you," "you" being the writer. But the admonition is so loose that it tells us very little. Finally the fire dies down and we are left among the ruins and the dead, which are apparently the books.

There follows a letter to a woman beginning *"Hi Kid"* and signed *"DJB."* It is barely literate, but has the charm of directness. It could be used to exemplify either the poverty of language after its rape or the virtues of the unliterary American idiom. Williams probably intends it to do the latter, but we cannot be certain, because its relationship with what comes before and after is merely that of juxtaposition.

The remaining four pages or so of the section take us from the process of writing to the subject itself. A doctor is visiting Beautiful thing in the basement smelling of "furnace odour" where she lies, her "long/body stretched out negligently on the dirty sheet." The movement of the verse, gentle and hesitant, carries much of the feeling:

> *—for I was overcome*
> *by amazement and could do nothing but admire*
> *and lean to care for you in your quietness—*
>
> *who looked at me, smiling, and we remained*
> *thus looking, each at the other . in silence .*
>
> *You lethargic, waiting upon me, waiting for*
> *the fire and I*
> *attendant upon you, shaken by your beauty*

She is still in life, not yet intertwined with the fire she is awaiting that will make her into poetry. She is Elsie-like, vulnerable yet strangely powerful in her lack of developed consciousness. There follow images of the tapestry hunt of the unicorn, images which Williams is to resume in Book V, and then the fine passage ("But you!/in your white lace dress") part of which had been printed separately in the 1930s, which shows how Beautiful thing has been misused: she has been given a "busted nose," and "maled and femaled . . . jealously."

And how is he, after all, to bring her into his poetry without destroying her? He must preserve the thing she is by preserving the precarious mixture of reverence and tenderness that he feels for her: and if writing is like a fire then the fire he brings to brighten her corner must be different from the other, it must be neither destructive nor transforming, it must be "a dark flame."

The whole four pages are as good as anything in *Paterson*, and go far to redeem the frequent messiness of the poem elsewhere. Williams is more unsure than he was in *Spring and All* about the relation between life and its transformation (or destruction) in writing, and his unsureness shows at times in the unclear connections between the description of the fire and the meanings attributed to it, in spite of the power of much of that description. But in this last part it is his very unsureness that is the subject of his writing, while his style takes on assurance. The tentative formation of relationship between doctor and patient, or between lover and lover, becomes the relationship between writer and subject in the process of realisation; and the contrasting passage that follows, about the savaging of Beautiful thing, in its account of the denial of that process, is equally moving and equally assured.

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IT WAS ELIOT who dominated poetry until the early 1950s, and such is literary fashion that apparently Williams could not but suffer—being misunderstood or, more commonly, disregarded under such dominance. By all the critics who followed Eliot's lead (that is, by most critics), Williams was regarded, when he was remembered, as a kind of Menshevik, without importance. His work was unpublished and thus largely unread in England until after his death, and less than ten years ago an influential English critic could still sum it up as "William Carlos Williams' poetry of red brick houses, suburban wives, cheerful standardised interiors." America is larger than England, and thus has a little more room for variety, but there too literary opinion is centralised, and in that huge landscape Williams often went undiscerned in the 1930s and 1940s.

What must be stressed, at this late date, is that he offers a valid alternative of style and attitude to the others available. It is offered not in his theory, which is fragmentary, sometimes inconsistent, and often poorly expressed, but in his poetry, which is among the best of our time. He is somebody from whom it is time we started taking lessons. Although he insisted on the American idiom, we must remember why: writing "thoroughly local in origin has some chance of being universal in application"; that idiom is part of a widely-used language, his enrichment of which has a bearing on all of us who read it and write it.

The first book of his to be published over here was his most recently written, *Pictures from Breughel*, which contains his last three collections of poems. There is a bareness about it that I can imagine was at first disconcerting to readers unfamiliar with Williams. But the bareness is not a sign of tiredness, rather it is the translation into language of a new ease in his relationship with the external world. A result of the ease is seen in the much greater emphasis on the personal that we find in this volume. In "Dog Injured in the Street" and "The Drunk and the Sailor," for example, poems which twenty years before would merely have implied Williams as onlooker, the subject is Williams himself so much involved in what he witnesses that he as good as participates in it. Another result of the ease is in the style, which is transparent to his intentions as never before. Statement emerges from Williams as both subject and author of the poem, not from him merely as author.

It is, however, from *Paterson* that Williams

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consciously dates his final development in style. The passage from Book II that he here reprints as a separate poem entitled "The Descent" contains many lines divided into three parts, which he called "variable feet." I do not find the name very clear: as Alan Stephens has pointed out in a review, a variable foot is as meaningless a term as an elastic inch; but if calling it so helped Williams to write this last volume, then it is sufficiently justified. Specifically, it gave him a rationale for the short lines grouped in threes that he wanted to use, of which the rhythms are as flexible and varied as in the best of his earlier poetry. This poem is about old age and is expressed largely in abstract terms; in tone, even in sound, it bears an astonishing—though we may hardly assume derivative—resemblance to some of the best passages of the *Four Quartets*: it advances with a halting, exploratory movement which is itself much of the poem's meaning. He is speaking of the recreation achieved by memory:

No defeat is made up entirely of defeat—since
the world it opens is always a place
formerly
unsuspected. A
world lost,
a world unsuspected,
beckons to new places
and no whiteness (lost) is so white as the memory
of whiteness .

Memory is a means of renewal, and for Williams anything that renews is an instrument for the exploration and definition of the new world, which he labours both to "possess" and be part of. For possession of the details is achieved not through the recording of them, but through the record's adherence to his feeling for them. The process is not of accumulation but of self-renewal.

The roar of the present, a speech
is, of necessity, my sole concern

he has said, in *Paterson*, but he is agent for the present only through the fidelity of his love for it.

The nature of the process is defined in this book with a renewed confidence, also. If in *Spring and All* the poet is seen as the firm antagonist to disorder and in *Paterson* as helplessly involved with that disorder, he is seen in "The Sparrow" finally as in a world where perhaps the words order and disorder are irrelevant. The sparrow is to a certain degree helpless, but he can "flutter his wings/in the dust" and "cry out lustily." In this poem the poet and his subject-matter share in the same activity, the essence of which is the expression of delight at one's own vigour. Vigour and delight inform the style itself, relating anecdote, description and statement smoothly and easily. "It is the poem/ of his existence/that triumphed/finally," he says of the sparrow, and in saying so might have been writing his own epitaph, for poem and existence are seen here to be expressed in similar terms.

There is more than self-expression involved; and, clearly, if we wish to learn from Williams' achievement, we should mark the clarity of evocation, the sensitivity of movement, and the purity of language in his efforts to realise spontaneity. But at the same time we should remember that these qualities, easy as they are to localise, cannot be learned from him in isolation. They, and the self-discipline controlling them, derive from a habitual sympathy, by which he recognises his own energy in that of the young housewife, the boys at the street corner, the half-wit girl who helps in the house, the sparrow, or the buds alternating down a bough. His stylistic qualities are governed, moreover, by a tenderness and generosity of feeling which makes them fully humane. For it is a humane action to attempt the rendering of a thing, person, or experience in the exact terms of its existence.

Pound Revalued

Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor. By DONALD DAVIE. *Routledge*, 35s.

IN THE SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES of the academy of Lagado, Lemuel Gulliver encountered "a scheme for abolishing all words whatsoever... since words are only names for things, it would be more convenient for all men to carry about them, such *things* as were necessary to express the particular business they are to discourse on."

> I have often beheld two of those sages almost sinking under the weight of their packs, like pedlars among us; who, when they met in the streets would lay down their loads, open their sacks, and hold conversation for an hour together....

Although the *Cantos* use words, their theoretical basis is that of the Lagado academics; supposedly eschewing abstraction and generalisation, the poet presents us with clusters of particular examples which will enable us to grasp his meaning more immediately than

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through common discourse—more immediately, and more precisely, for he believes that "an idea is only an imperfect induction from fact." The fundamental principle of the *Cantos* is this attempt to express ideas only in terms of sensory impression, and by its very nature it was bound to fail. Pound cannot, after all, stop us from inferring wrong ideas from the fact presented; as Yvor Winters has cogently argued, the method leaves us at best with "no way of knowing whether we have had any ideas or not." Pound, the dumb pedlar, sinks under the weight of his pack, a familiar and miscellaneous collection of fragments gathered in a lifetime of travels. He is an ancient mariner who cannot hold us, for he is unable to tell his story coherently.

It is not the least of Mr. Davie's virtues that in his excellent new book he faces squarely such objections to Pound and yet argues convincingly for his status as a major poet of the century. He does not fall into the trap of total commitment to the *Cantos*, and there is no talk of an illusory coherence of design or strength of construction: instead we are made aware of the deeply conflicting elements in the poet's practice. Committed to a language of particulars, Pound is nevertheless fascinated by ideas, as only a dogmatist can be. A poem about history cannot avoid ideas and generalisation, and the *Cantos* are not meant to. There is nothing covert about the moral of this poem:

> *with usura the line grows thick*
> *with usura is no clear demarcation*
> *and no man can find site for his dwelling.*

It is a moral which seems to me quite irrelevant to the present age, and untrue as a statement about the past. Pound's pretensions to comment on his times and his inability to do so adequately, an inability which, but for his evident insanity (the methodised madness of the Lagado academics), would have to be seen as despicably criminal, are a limitation to the achievement of the *Cantos*. Yet to say this is not to say that their interest lies in a few isolated passages of beauty—

> *Rain; empty river; a voyage,*
> *Fire from frozen cloud, heavy rain in the twilight*
> *Under the cabin roof was one lantern.*
> *The reeds are heavy; bent;*
> *and the bamboos speak as if weeping.*

Although the *Cantos* fail as an epic account of history and in their attempt to establish standards of judgment and a pantheon of heroes, they do often succeed as lyric, the lyric that has to do with time past. "Wherever Pound deals with history successfully, he does so in an elegiac, not an epic, spirit"; and so Mr. Davie rests the burden of his case on the reflective

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METHUEN

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verse of *The Pisan Cantos* and *Section Rock-Drill*.

Mr. Davie is able to seize this essential point about Pound's poetry as it has not been grasped before because he sees him as a poet personally and directly involved in his poems in a way that the symbolist poet, such as Eliot, cannot be. He distinguishes very carefully between Pound's "realist" theory of the image and Eliot's symbolist aesthetic of the objective correlative, deriving from two different aspects of de Gourmont; and equally clearly differentiates Yeats' theory of the mask from Pound's use of the *persona* as a means of self-expression. (This leads Mr. Davie to reconsider the conventional view of *Mauberley* as a poem about the sort of poet Pound was not; he points to the similarity of content in the *Mauberley* verses and the *Imaginary Letters* of about the same time, and concludes that in *Mauberley* Pound is considering his own situation to a large extent. This revision of accepted judgment is characteristic of the book as a whole.)

Because *The Pisan Cantos* are centred firmly on Pound's own situation in the detention camp at Pisa, they enable him to return to the kind of poetry at which he is best. Yet one might still object that Winters' remarks about the *Cantos* in general apply especially to the broken verse of the later instalments:

> *in this air as of Kuanon*
> *enigma forgetting the times and seasons*
> *but this air brought her ashore à la marina*
> *with the great shell borne on the seawaves*
> *nautilis biancastra*

What are we to make of these many phrases suspended motionless, often without verbs, floating across the page, into the mind, amidst the jumble of idle observation and crank economics, assertive joviality and incomplete reminiscence? Mr. Davie is surely right to suggest that Pound's aim in this odd poetry is "to state, not ideas, but the form behind and in ideas, the moment before that 'fine thing held in the mind' has precipitated out now this idea, now that." It is this aim which embodies Pound's truly admirable and overwhelming imaginative audacity; it is in this that Pound successfully obeyed the injunction to make it new—in the attempt not merely to *describe* the workings of the mind before it is conscious of its own thought, but to *mime* them in words, to verbalise the preverbal.

In this way the later cantos endeavour to solve aesthetically the problems that arise when the poet seeks to generalise without generalisations. It is a mark of the originality and newness of Pound's art that we find we have no ready terms in which to discuss his achievement in this poetry. Winters' arguments are seen to be quite irrelevant to this intention. There is no adequate standard of comparison, unless we think of dada and surrealist art. But Pound directs his efforts towards establishing a continuity between present and past in historical perspective, whilst the dream-world of surrealism sets out to annihilate history altogether.

Mr. Davie makes brilliant use of the art-criticism of Adrian Stokes to illuminate this aspect of the *Cantos*—their imitation of "the state of mind in which ideas tremble on the edge of expression." I am not sure, however, that he makes plain enough the way in which their late achievement depends on internal conflict. Pound's art is indeed essentially elegiac, and nowhere more intensely than in the endeavour to put into words the state of mind before words intervened. *The Pisan Cantos* are not simply about the past in that Pound there looks back on his long life to remote days before World War I; they are about the pastness of *all* that is deeply felt, of all that is felt before the consciousness can intrude with its ideas, with thinking. Even the observation of what is present in the detention camp turns into the observation of the past: "on such a litter rode Pontius/under such canvas." The poet puts his trust in "love": "What thou lovest well remains." But it does not remain—the days with Yeats and Ford and Orage are gone; what the poet has loved well has left him. Here is the personal application of a theme which in earlier poems had seemed remote and literary, the lament for a past civilisation. Just as the love which remains to him is a love that has departed, so also the order which Pound sees as the basis of a good society, and which is to derive from the heroic example of the Leader, is also a disorder; it is the aftermath of Fascism, it is the detention camp itself. (It is far worse than that, too.) The visible failure of Pound's attempt to cooperate with history drove him inward to the creation of a poetic form which would contain and express just such frustration, and yet suggest something of the human will for renewal, to make fresh starts.

Mr. Davie has written a book that is a necessary companion to Hugh Kenner's pioneer study, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound*; it is well-informed, provocative, and readable. Although it was probably a mistake to begin the book with a discussion of the version of the Confucian Odes—surely not as good as all that—Mr. Davie rarely falters thereafter. Thanks to him, Pound is steadier in the literary stock-exchange, and all the more so for the high value Mr. Davie attaches to creative activity itself—"the great happiness and the great proof of being alive."

Martin Dodsworth

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Holy Matrimony

Contraception and Holiness. A Symposium. *Collins*, 25s.

IT MUST, I think be allowed, even by the Panglosses of our ecumenical times, that the spectacle of a celibate priesthood discussing intimate details of female anatomy is not edifying. That the Roman Catholic hierarchy is forced to do this in order to discover a method of birth control that is face-saving as well as efficient makes sympathy difficult. For if they had not formerly taken so stiff a line, they would not now be in such a pickle. And what has brought them to the point of changing their minds? It is not only the pressure of circumstances, a leaping birth-rate and the prevalence of contraceptives, it is the revolt of their own people. The Catholic layman has found his voice, especially here and in America, where this symposium of Catholic opinion was first published.

One sees at once that rebellion is well mounted. Should we then leave matters in the hands of Catholics, allowing only the faithful to comment on Roman Catholic pronouncements and books such as this? Of course we should not. It was our freedom and our discoveries that brought birth control into use, and if sterner members of their communion say we have infected Catholics with our ideas—well, perhaps we have; and all the more reason to stand by them. Again, the contributors to this book are all of trained intelligence and professional status. How small a part that is of the Catholic world. Can they *swing it?* With our help and the weight of a world's necessity, they may, and our help is valuable, for it is in countries that are largely Protestant or unbelieving that the Church is most vulnerable, most sensitive to outside temper and opinion. The introduction to the book, by Archbishop Roberts, S.J., is really splendid. Easy, forceful, good-tempered, he sets a standard the rest on the whole maintain. It was, he reminds us, his inability to comprehend Roman Catholic objections to birth control "that elicited from the English [R.C.] bishops their statement that contraception is unchangeably against the law of God." The Archbishop is puzzled, not because the Church says "I say so, you obey" but because it says "contraception is a question of natural law and can be resolved purely through the powers of reason." He goes on: "As an English Catholic I cannot but recall a similar dilemma of conscience which faced my ancestors when Pope Pius V, after glorifying the secular power as of truly divine origin, went on to depose Queen Elizabeth and free her subjects from all allegiance to her"—even to the point, though he does not mention this, of encouraging

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persons of "right motives" to "rid the world of that evil woman." On the whole, he prefers the "viewpoint of the Lambeth Conference" on birth control. But of course, Lambeth is not Rome. He tells us that what he really fears, and well he may, is the Catholic habit "of enthroning human reason in theory and of deposing it in practice." The medical and scientific essays in this book seem incontrovertible. The writers tell us, what most of us already knew, that their Church's pronouncements about sex and marriage are based on imperfect knowledge and an inevitable lack of experience. What, asks one contributor (Rosemary Ruether from Claremont) in a cry that comes truly from the heart, can an unmarried priest know of sex except as "a purely egotistic drive" or in the context of fornication? The living, growing relationship of a happy marriage, the unselfish yet spontaneous use of sex to make this growth possible, in love, in companionship, how can this be helped by such heartless and ignorant instruction from the Church, as to be continent, or to use the "safe period"? It is of course discussion of the safe period that involves the hierarchy in those details of almost laughable complication and indecency I have referred to, resulting in pronouncements which have been defined, justly, I think, as "a sure guide to misery and muddle." Vigorously, Dr. Ruether weighs in: "Anybody who has tried to live by the temperature-taking, glucose-testing, chartmaking routine imposed by the rhythm method with its artificial manipulation of the whole relationship can scarcely be led to see this as any real spiritual discipline."

WHAT ANXIETY—for the "safe period" is hardly a happy name for it—what neurosis, and what a danger to marriage lies in this method. And of course, to the outsider, what nonsense it must appear. If you once allow the intention to control birth, why cavil at the means? One contributor quotes the odds against conception when no preventive is used. And indeed the Church's whole attitude in this matter does seem to come rather close to the bookies' field—as if the odds against the life force were somehow "unfair" with contraceptives, "fair" only with rhythm. A cry from another contributor, that the Church does not seem to realise "how difficult sex is" also goes home. It often occurred to me, while reading *Casti Conubii*, that the advice given there by Pope Pius XI—as to prayers and holy pictures, that the ambience of religion might embrace those about to embrace—would, if faithfully carried out, render contraceptives superfluous. Meanwhile the verdict waits. And what is the loving, faithful Catholic to do? A contributor quotes St. Augustine: *"Ama et fac quod vis."* He may decide, this loving faithful one—and for the moment keep it to himself, if his confessor does not question directly—that true love permits the unselfish use of whatever method of contraception he chooses. Soon the Church may agree. Then he will not have to keep it secret.

Stevie Smith

Generalisations

Mannerism—the Crisis of the Renaissance and the Origin of Modern Art.
By ARNOLD HAUSER. *Routledge & Kegan Paul*, 2 vols., £6 6s.

THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY re-discovery of Mannerism has so far told us much more about the nature of the 20th century than about that of Mannerism. To some extent all judgments of the past are conditioned by prevailing circumstances; indeed the best histories have nearly always been those where the results of conscientious research have been illuminated by that emotional urgency which can spring only from an awareness of contemporary problems. Dr. Hauser points to the influence of liberalism on Michelet's interpretation of the Renaissance, and recognises that modern investigations into the period that followed it spring from the very different preoccupations of our own century. But any hope that such self-awareness would have served more as a warning than as an invitation to reckless speculation is doomed to disappointment. Plunging bravely into the 16th century Dr. Hauser finds in it everything that he considers to be most characteristic of 20th-century man. Page after page of unsubstantiated generalisations follow each other in bewildering—and often stimulating—succession. What exciting lectures these would have made to undergraduates some forty years ago—for this is the period to which most of the opinions (and nearly all the bibliographical references) belong. Where to-day, to take only one instance, is "the Renaissance generally credited with the revival, not only of the arts, but also of learning and, above all, science?"

"Tintoretto, Brughel, El Greco are the first modern artists; Shakespeare, Cervantes, John Donne the first modern poets; Montaigne, Machiavelli, Galileo the first modern thinkers; they are all typical representatives of mannerism." Reading this and similar passages—only four pages after Michelet has been shown to

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be confused for claiming that Rabelais, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Columbus, Copernicus, Luther, Calvin, and Brunelleschi were representative figures of the Renaissance—I was suddenly reminded of Christopher Isherwood's account of his history master in *Lions and Shadows*:

> Mr. Holmes fairly staggered us by the impudence of his generalisations: "All revolutions occur when the worst period is over and things are improving.... All revolutions are followed by a military dictatorship.... All military dictatorships are followed by a restoration of constitutional monarchy.... Every constitutional monarch...." He could continue like this, absurdly, preposterously, until he had wrung a protest from one or other of us. "But surely, sir, that isn't always true?" Then he would pounce upon the heckler at once, delighted. "Of c-course it isn't. Tell me an exception."

One hopes that Dr. Hauser will be equally delighted if one points out some exceptions.

Part of the trouble lies in the very schematic arrangement of his book. The first hundred and fifty pages are devoted to a "general" section: this is well named, for almost anything that occurred in the 16th century in the way of economic, political, or religious crisis is held to be characteristic of Mannerism. Though many of the ideas are of real interest and importance, evidence is again and again manipulated to suit the argument. Thus Dr. Hauser finds Narcissism a typical ingredient of the Mannerist attitude to life, and refers to a few examples of Narcissus in the painting of the period that interests him, without ever mentioning the (easily verifiable) fact that this theme had attracted artists long before and was to continue to do so long after any age into which even Dr. Hauser can claim to fit Mannerism. The most delicate problems, where every fragment of contemporary opinion needs to be appraised with subtlety and care, are disposed of with casual omniscience: "to the new conflict-torn generation the repose, balance and order of the Renaissance seemed cheap, if not actually mendacious"—adjectives which may, perhaps, be more fittingly applied to the self-assurance which can cope so summarily with such difficult questions.

The second section of the book ignores most of the historical generalisations of the first part and adopts a far more conventional approach made up of art-historical narrative and stylistic appraisal. There is less to provoke (and also less to admire) in this fairly straightforward account of certain aspects of 16th-century art in Italy and elsewhere in Europe, but once again Dr. Hauser treats questions that have exercised generations of art-historians in a brisk and authori-

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tative manner which will excite their envy rather than their admiration or approval. How easy, for instance, to say of the *Fire in the Borgo* in the Vatican that "though the execution was completely [*sic*] in the hands of Giulio Romano and Francesco Penni, Raphael's share in the design and stylistic character of the work seems indisputable." And one hopes that it was not Dr. Hauser himself who was responsible for choosing the photographs for the plates or their unsatisfactory captions—though, admittedly, it is rather gratifying to read in his text that in Bronzino's *Allegory* and similar pictures "sex is subjected to a ritual to make it the more subtly enjoyable, and a veil is drawn over it, not to conceal it but to emphasise it," and then to turn to the relevant illustration in which one does indeed find the veil still there, though it has long since been rightly removed from the picture itself by the National Gallery restorers.

After chapters dealing with the literature of the period, Dr. Hauser then turns to the modern scene and brings out those analogies with Mannerism which he finds in authors such as Proust and Kafka.

THE WRITER OF A stern review who ends on a note of regret, almost of apology, may well be accused of weeping crocodile tears. And yet there are special reasons why this risk must be faced in the case of Dr. Hauser. In this book, as indeed in his *Philosophy of Art History* (published in 1958), he again and again shows how aware he is of all the dangerous traps into which he then proceeds to fall with bewildering insouciance. Wild claims are followed—or even anticipated—by the most cautious qualifications. Regret that he has not taken these to heart need not imply any lack of appreciation of the enormous sweep of his knowledge: only an acute disappointment that he has not put it to more constructive use. The problems which Dr. Hauser sets out to tackle are among the most interesting and important that can face any student of cultural history, and he comes to them equipped with a range of reading and experience that makes many other scholars of more obvious attainments seem provincial by comparison. But at a time when art-historians everywhere are becoming increasingly doubtful as to whether the concept of Mannerism has any validity at all, Dr. Hauser seems to confuse rather than to clarify the issue.

In the early years of this century, when the old age and death of Michelangelo were considered to mark the end of Italian art, the charting of a whole new "school" served the valuable purpose of disposing of those absolute classical standards which had inhibited the true appreciation of so many painters—at first men like Giotto or Masaccio who had been seen as primitives struggling valiantly towards the still unattainable achievements of Raphael; and then those artists of a later period who seemed to have rejected those very same achievements out of perversity or incompetence. Impetus was given to this process by certain apparent parallels with the assumed goals of Mannerism which were detected in the aims of the Expressionists. The intellectual and imaginative efforts that went into this re-discovery were almost exclusively the work of Germans and Austrians, and their labours constitute one of the great art-historical triumphs of the present century. But something very different is needed to-day, and during the last few years scholars in Europe and America have been slowly trying to unravel the many different strands which, on closer inspection, are seen to have become inextricably entangled. Careful analysis is required before a vast new synthesis can be reconstructed, but Dr. Hauser has chosen to ignore all the attempts that have been fade in this direction.

We need now to establish the differences, as well as the similarities, between artists, cities, generations. We need to assemble new evidence so as to look freshly at the old *idées reçues*, such as the endlessly repeated notion (included here,

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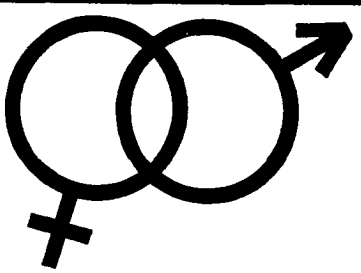

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of course) that "in all important works artists had to follow the instructions of their spiritual advisers." Instead of undocumented generalities about the collapse of the Italian *bourgeoisie*, we need to be told specifically who were the patrons of new artists as they came to the fore and—if possible—whether stylistic considerations played any part in their choice. This, after all, despite some dogmatic and questionable conclusions, is what Frederick Antal, a man of rather similar outlook to Dr. Hauser, did for the Florentine 14th century. Instead of a vague disquisition on the Reformation and its relationship with Mannerism, would it not have been worth at least mentioning that Bartolomeo Panciatichi, the sitter for one of Bronzino's greatest portraits, was himself later accused of heresy? Only when detailed questions of this sort have been raised will it become possible to make any important statements about the "Crisis of the Renaissance and the Origin of Modern Art."

Francis Haskell

The story of Michael Davies who was sentenced to death for the murder of a young boy in a gang-fight on Clapham Common. After three months in the condemned cell he was reprieved and has always maintained that he was innocent. Tony Parker examines this claim and in a disturbing commentary tells how it came about that Davies was, in the opinion of many, wrongly convicted.

TONY PARKER

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Worm's Eye View

The Giant Dwarfs. By Gisela Elsner. *Weidenfeld & Nicolson*, 25s.

The Makepeace Experiment. By Abram Tertz. *Collins and Harvill Press*, 18s.

The Woman in the Dunes. By Kobo Abe. *Secker & Warburg*, 21s.

The Human Season. By Edward Wallant. *Gollancz*, 21s.

"The giant dwarfs" comes to us with the Prix Formentor and the multilingual approval of thirteen publishers. Without the Formentor rosette, would one turn one's head at Miss Elsner? Well, maybe. This is an album of grotesques, the world as it appears through the distorting and therefore truthful eyes of a small child. What he sees is a Bosch-like fantasy, in which, for instance, "eating" becomes the shovelling into a gigantic maw of loads of organic matter. And who is to say that it is our blandly categorised view of the world that is the right one? The fantasy is one of ugliness, cruelty, tapeworms and copulation just like little dogs. The book's weakness is that four-fifths of the time the child-narrator device is not, in fact, in use: what we are offered is a straightforward adult view of the world as an enormous turd, expressed through the devices of satirical distortion and invention familiar to us, like the thought and the manner, from the writings of advanced Germans forty years ago.

The best way of deflating a gasbag is not to wallop it but to stick it with a pin, which is no doubt why the past and present rulers of the Soviet Union, as if anxious to make his point for him, compel the writer of *The Makepeace Experiment* to publish in translation under a pseudonym. I have not been taken by Abram Tertz's earlier works. This one is a delightful fable whose hero, Leonard Makepeace, has acquired the art of thought-control through the benign means of personal hypnotism. He becomes the ruler of a provincial dorp, lovingly drawn in the tradition of Russian humour, and sets to work to make its people happy not by creating the means of happiness but by telling them that is what they have got. It works, at first. The citizens of Lyubimov are happily persuaded that river-water is champagne and that of their own choice they wish to overfulfil the norm by two hundred per cent. But the strain of fooling all the people all the time is ultimately unbearable, and Leonard Makepeace never did manage to fool the crops. His dictatorship perishes, with the city of Lyubimov, as disastrously as if it had been malign.

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The satire here is unconcealed and sharp, but perhaps it is not Tertz's dissection of dictatorship that troubles the Soviet literary bureaucrats (one of whose surnames he has maliciously borrowed to adorn a ludicrous secret agent of the central government) so much as his evidently solemn assertion that Makepeace may come and go but Russia, and the Church, go on.

"The Woman in the Dunes" is a fable too, a strictly individual, almost solipsist fable, the kind it makes sense to write in a society where even the unconforming individual is not yet inwardly free enough to ask the questions that social fables answer, or in one where he is too free to need to—which is, I suppose, Mr. Kobo Abe's condition. The framework of this fable is excessively simple. A Japanese insect collector on holiday from his college finds himself trapped in a vast pit among sand dunes. The pit exists to catch the blown sand that would otherwise engulf the village behind it. In the pit lives a woman. Her job, and now his job since the villagers will not let him out, is to shovel up the blown sand for the villagers to hoist to the top and remove to some safer place.

In this situation, the man's first, automatic reaction is to assume that he will immediately be let out; then, when he is not, to argue that he ought to be; then to try to escape; finally, because sand-shovelling has become his life, and he has made it tolerable by a tiny triumph which enables him to collect water from the bottom of the pit instead of being dependent on the villagers to let it down, to stay put even though he could escape.

What is he, then? (I imagine a small critical industry growing up in Japan to answer that question). Evidently he was a moderately contented college lecturer interested in insects. He is now a moderately contented shoveller of sand, interested in sand. That is what his conditions make possible, and why should he wish it to be otherwise? Could he wish it otherwise? It is not so much that being one thing is better or worse than being the other, but that he *is* this and not that. He is not resigned to his condition; it defines him; at the same time, since it is given, he defines it and himself. I admit to feeling that this would be a fairly small conclusion, even if it were new, to illustrate in a fairly long fable, but those who awarded the Yomuiuri Prize for literature in 1960 thought differently.

I have often been tempted by the hypothetically blasphemous thought that if God exists he must be not blindly but deliberately cruel. This is an absurd conclusion easily escaped; but I was once interested enough to enquire how it is escaped by those who do not just deny the premise. An organisation whose purpose it is to deal with such questions answered my enquiry with a small pamphlet by a Jesuit luminary. After knocking down various Aunt Sallies, he offered the thought, though this was not quite how he put it, that I might have saved myself the stamped addressed envelope and read the book of Job. Now that is a perfectly good answer if you take the premise seriously enough. But it makes a small and ruinous ending to the first novel of the late Edward Wallant. His Job is a New York plumber called Joseph Berman, who as the book opens has just lost the one thing that made the many other good things of his life worth having: his wife. She died, and Berman in his silent house disintegrates. This is a fearful and truthful account of the effects of loneliness and grief, of the emptiness of familiar things when their purpose is gone. Berman makes tea, cleans the dishes, watches television, goes to bed; goes each morning to the work in which he took such pride, greets his friends and his daughter calmly, with the calm of death; returns each evening to his silent house, makes tea, does not clean the dishes, watches television; storms, sobs, rages and curses God. And just at the end, when under the conventions of life maybe and certainly of fiction one supposes that he must be taken too, miserably but like a man, the Lord answers Joe Berman out of the whirlwind and Berman is comforted. Which, in life, is no doubt sometimes so and is a good thing if it enables people in Berman's position to go on living; but come Father D'Arcy and all I don't believe it, and feel it diminishes a book, whose schmalzy flashbacks of happiness could otherwise be forgiven, as human and truthful fiction.

Stephen Hugh-Jones

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PRESS

Looking for an Idiom

BRITISH SPORTS journalism is still looking for an idiom; still waiting for its Red Smith, its Damon Runyon, its A. J. Liebling, let alone its Ring Lardner; still waiting for the columnist who can be read by intellectuals without shame and by working men without labour. Meanwhile, it is afflicted by dichotomy: a split between mandarin indulgence and stylised stridency, this in itself a valid reflection of the class structure.

Each of these particular groups of journalists has its own special cross to bear. The more sensitive popular writer knows that almost every piece he writes is a self-betrayal, a selling out to the cruel machine which has produced him, a wilful limitation of his powers. He is thus particularly sensitive to any form of outside criticism.

The quality writer, on the other hand, is an isolated, if not an alienated figure, writing for an informed minority when, given the wide reference of his subject, he should be speaking to the generality. Besides he is often poorly paid, while the successful popular columnist is affluent, a creature of jet travel, bottomless expense accounts, and first-class hotels.

What is wholly lacking is an idiom which will throw a bridge across the two cultures, avoiding, on the one hand, bathos, which is the nemesis of "good" sports writing, and on the other stylised vulgarity, the nemesis of the popular school. The American sports writer, though now in a barren period, a period of pygmies, has never had this problem, precisely because, in a more fluid society, the idiom lay close at hand. Thus it was possible for Ring Lardner, a serious artist as well as a journalist, to take that idiom and do something quite new with it, in creative terms.

LARDNER WAS for years a travelling reporter with the Chicago White Sox, who nicknamed him "Old Hawk Eye." He was perhaps the first writer to exploit the possibilities of working-class speech and idiom in fiction, particularly in his "Letters from a Busher" called *You Know Me, Al*, and in stories such as "Alibi Ike," "My Roomy," and "Hurry Kane." When the White Sox threw the 1919 World Series and became, by popular baptism, the "Black Sox," Lardner grew disillusioned with the game, and tended to cultivate a homespun, Mid-West newspaper personality which made him one of the ten most famous men in America, but hardly impinged on his central talent. (One of his sons, John Lardner, was probably as good a sports writer, writing a gifted and urbane column for *Newsweek*, though he had none of his father's antic creativity.)

A. J. Liebling, again a fine journalist rather than a creative writer, had the same bland personality as the younger Lardner. He wrote splendidly on boxing (and even, while covering the 1952 Olympics for the *New Yorker*, produced a memorably amusing piece on soccer). Red Smith (of the New York *Herald Tribune*) is possibly not quite in the same category as these three, but again the idiom has been found and used. Though whimsical at times, he is naturally and unforcedly funny, knowledgeable yet at the same time light and diverting. One has the impression of a man, a definite man, writing naturally, rather than of a hoarse voice, shouting into the wind in somebody's else's dialect.[1]

THE DIFFERENT ATTITUDES to popular sport, with their considerable consequences, were perfectly illustrated by a photograph published, many years ago, in an American magazine. It showed President Roosevelt clowning, baseball in hand, at a match which opened the season. What British Prime Minister has been seen, in similar circumstances, at a soccer match, though soccer is as indubitably our national sport as baseball is America's? At most, he might pad on to the turf of Wembley before a Cup Final, to exchange patronising handshakes with the contending teams.

The Establishment game has always been

BRIAN GLANVILLE *is the sports columnist of the* Sunday Times. *He is also the author of seven novels, of which the most recent are* Diamond *and* The Rise of Gerry Logan. (*Secker & Warburg*). *His newest volume of short stories is* The King of Hackney Marshes.

[1] In Europe, the best sporting journalists—Gianni Brera, Jacques Ferran, Robert Vergne—write as whole men, whose subject happens to be sport. This, again, contrasts them with many of their British equivalents, whom one could scarcely imagine writing on anything *but* sport. A football report in *L'Équipe*, the finest of all sports daily newspapers, or in its sister weekly, *France Football*, might well begin (and has): *"Pends-toi, brave Fontaine! Nous avons battu à Monaco, et tu n'y étais pas!"* The multiplicity of Brera's allusions, in the Italian Press, are such that the mere subject matter threatens to founder helplessly beneath them.

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cricket and it has led, inevitably, to Establishment writing; writing which can often be excellent, but which is far outside the province of the ordinary sports fan.

This rigid polarity, this lack of a solvent idiom, is shown by the way our popular sports writers tend to model themselves on the Americans. Inevitably, there is no rationale, no inner direction, so that the result has been a hybrid disaster, as tasteless and inorganic as a mid-Atlantic television series. Thus, the popular British sports-writer is never being himself. He is a mimic, a febrile ventriloquist's dummy, using somebody else's eye and ear and experience, and trying pitifully to pass them off as his own.

The results are twofold; first, an appalling waste of talent; secondly, the reluctance of really gifted working-class boys to go into popular sports writing, when they are the very people who might fructify it.

Whatever the sports pages of the popular newspapers may suggest, their sports journalists are not all crass, insensitive men who go through life with their eyes shut and their ears closed. Many of them, indeed—one thinks of Alan Hoby, columnist of the *Sunday Express*, Sam Leitch of the *Sunday Mirror*, Frank McGhee of the *Daily Mirror*, Reg Drury of the *News of the World*—are shrewd, perceptive men with a splendid gift for anecdote and observation; qualities quite unwanted by the Moloch of mass circulation.

THE POPULAR PRESS, indeed, has been strangely unaffected by changes in the structure of British society, the gradual levelling up, the vastly increased chances for a clever working-class boy to get a good education. If anything, it has become much more resolutely low-brow than it was before the war, stylistically much more rigid.

The bright working-class boy, therefore, is no keener than he was then to become a popular sports journalist, for the cultural pattern of the society is all against it. Having acquired, against the odds, a good education and a literary style, he is naturally loath to mortgage them. There could scarcely be a more cogent example than Neville Cardus, the very father figure of mandarin cricket writers, who was brought up in the back-streets of Manchester at a time when poor, clever boys did not get to University. The struggle was proportionately harder, the determination not to squander his literary gifts proportionately greater.

Of a younger generation, there is John Arlott, once a Hampshire policeman, later a celebrated radio commentator on cricket, whose style is as literate, precise, and rounded as Cardus' own. It is worth quoting a passage from each of them.

Here is Cardus writing an obituary for Hubert Preston, a cricket journalist who died in 1960, at the age of ninety-one.

> I didn't dare go into the Lord's Press Box during my first season as a cricket writer for the *Manchester Guardian*. I was shy, provincially raw. I wrote my reports sitting on the Green Bank. I wrote them on press telegraph forms, and at close of play handed them in at the telegraph office under the clock at the Nursery End.
>
> One afternoon, Hubert Preston saw me as I sat on the Green Bank, scribbling my message. "Why don't you come into the Press Box?" he said in his own brisk, rapidly articulated way. He took me by the arm and led me up the steep iron steps. The tea interval wasn't over yet. Preston introduced me to Sidney Pardon, who then introduced me to other members of the Press Box, some of them life members. Each made a courteous bow to me; it was like a *levée*. Pardon pointed to a seat in the back row. In time, he assured me, I would graduate to a seat among the elect. . . . Hubert's deafness was the reason why, now and again, the aristocratic Pardon was obliged to raise his voice. Pardon once apologised to me for an occasional voice crescendo. "You know," he said, "Hubert is quite sensationally deaf."

This is the "quality" school at its most engaging; evocative and concise, controlled yet informal, free from inflation and the straining for effect which are inevitable when the writer forgets that what he is writing about is, after all, only a sport.

By the same token, no one has captured better the romance of professional football for the young fan than John Arlott.

> Bacon was a tall man from Derby County, with a shaving-brush tuft of hair growing out from a shallow forehead above a mighty jaw. His chest was like a drum, his thighs hugely tapering, and he had two shooting feet which he threw at footballs as if with intent to burst them. It was on April 3rd in the Year of Our Lord one-thousand-nine-hundred-and-thirty-one — a Good Friday, as I recall, with Reading's relegation virtually certain—that A. Bacon, at centre-forward, realised all his dreams. The match was against Stoke City at Elm Park, and Bacon proceeded to score six goals against them; six goals of immense excitement. He had a habit of hitting a ball well forward on his instep: not a toe-ender by any means, but from about the line of stitching joining the toecap to the instep—a point of impact only possible to a man of immensely strong legs and ankles. That day, everything he touched flew at the Stoke goal like a shell. But for some great saves he must have scored twenty, and his last goal was scored from an angle of about one degree to the goal line on the right of the goal and the ball, flying vertically into the goal, as I shall never forget, thrust the roof of the net high above the crossbar.

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There may be a sentimental moment or two here, but once more, the observation is fresh and precise; the writer has used not only his memory but his eyes. The popular sports journalist, to the contrary, is so thoroughly the prisoner of his style, takes his ambience so utterly for granted, that his language tends always to be inexact and merely emotive.

This, for instance, is Peter Wilson, the procreator of the modern English sports column, on the world heavyweight title fight between Rocky Marciano and Don Cockell, in San Francisco:

> What is courage? I give you the answer, fellow Englishmen, in two words—Don Cockell ... this was the kind of extra courage which makes you proud to belong to the same race as the boy who grew up in the back streets of Battersea.... And that is why the high and the mighty, the men with riches and the men with power, the women with beauty and vast possessions are rising in a kind of primaeval mass... sympathy and acclamation for a man from thousands of miles away, whose tongue they can hardly understand.

The contrast between Wilson, on the one hand, and journalists such as Arlott and Cardus, on the other, is a curiously ironic one. For it is Arlott and Cardus, writers of working-class origin, who have developed a mandarin style in the quality Press, Wilson, the old Harrovian, who has been one of the architects of the popular style.

WHAT IS STRANGE about this style—or stylisation—is that it has evolved so little since Peter Wilson began his *Sunday Pictorial* column in 1938. This, for better or worse, was certainly a breakthrough. Till then, the acknowledged innovator of popular British sports journalism had been Trevor Wignall of the *Daily Express*. In his time, he was regarded as highly daring and dangerously outspoken, though in retrospect, his columns seem dull, prosaic, and tame.

In 1937, for example, when Fred Perry returned to England as a professional tennis player, Wignall wrote, "He does not want to cause embarrassment either to himself or to those with whom he was formerly associated, and so he will not be here to use a couple of tickets for the (Wimbledon) stand, even if they were sent to him. Yet he has a better right to them, even when the professional aspect is introduced, than some who have been financially assisted to make an appearance on the Centre Court. The simon pure amateurism of tennis is no better or more worthy of respect than it is in ice hockey."

Or again—with almost engaging innocence—"It is one of my sorrows that I always know ten times more than I can ever print. If I were to publish, for example, the details of a talk I had last Friday with a man prominent in fighting, a sensation would be created that would last for weeks."

Wilson, from the first, was less ingenuous. His column began with the authentic, now familiar, hollow boom, the Lear-like promise of apocalypse:

> *I will do such things*
> *What they are, yet I know not, but they shall be*
> *The terrors of the earth.*

One sentence paragraphs, endless reiteration of the first person singular: Sport With the Lid Off. Peter Wilson Exposes.

Yet nothing seems to *get* exposed; we are in the presence of a great gun, filled with blank ammunition.

> Let's kick off with Soccer.
> I believe the stars of the boot-and-shoe game [*why shoe?*] are the worst paid of all our public entertainers.

A valid point, forcefully made, yet it is not sustained nor, in the weeks and months ahead, is it resurrected. Instead, the valid social issue is quickly obscured by vague accusations of rough play, assertions that there are players who put a knee in their opponent's thigh or kick him in the ankle; a fact woefully apparent to any of his readers who stood, Saturday by Saturday, on the terraces.

Aggression seems to stop short at the merely offensive statement.

> The possibility of Great Britain eventually winning the tie brings to my mind that O. Schmidt of Rumania is quite the worst player who has ever appeared in Davis Cup matches in this country.

Tennis, in fact, is a sport which Wilson played with success, and on which he is indisputably expert, while he is perhaps the most knowledgeable of all his contemporaries on boxing. This expertise—however disguised by stylisation and the struggle for effect—tends to set him apart from most of the columnists who followed him, few of whom had a deep technical knowledge of their sports.

Over the past quarter of a century, Wilson has remained steadily at the top of his profession, moving briefly to the *Daily Express*, in the fifties, then back to the *Mirror* group, and the *Daily Mirror*. At the *Daily Express*, there were visible efforts to produce more memorable writing, for a more sophisticated audience, but the results were not happy. The world cruiserweight title fight between Sugar Ray Robinson and Joey Maxim gave rise to one pleasing image—"there was always artistry in what Robinson did in his hemp and canvas studio"—but it also produced this:

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> Maxim was no longer the plodding clod. He was the descendant of those Italian men who ploughed the baked iron furrows with wooden ploughs while their women work beside them like oxen. He was as strong and brown and terrifying as the executioner who comes at dawn.

He also wrote of "Len Harvey, so finely chiselled that he looked sculpted out of whitest marble—never was there such a marmorean boxer. Would there have been some Praxiteles of pugilism to immortalise the symmetry of young Harvey."

Wilson, of course, was in no sense an original; he derived from the harder hitting, more egocentric reaches of the American school of sports journalism. With Desmond Hackett and J. L. Manning, however, he has been the most significant, and symptomatic, figure in post-war British sporting writing, though the phenomenon of Hackett, who succeeded him on the *Express*, shows how far the cult of personality has travelled.

UNTIL THE ADVENT of Hackett, it would be quite inaccurate and misleading to talk about an *Express* style of sports writing, for it simply did not exist. Writers such as the verbose Wignall, the whimsical, literate John Macadam (who could, at his occasional best, bridge the gap in idiom), the precocious Frank Butler, and Wilson himself, were utterly dissimilar in kind. But Hackett was far more purely an *Express* man, an *Express* creation. The time had clearly come when the popular Press was sufficiently sure of itself to manufacture its own sports columnists, in its own house image.

Hackett was in no sense a prodigy. He had, when he was given his opportunities—there was what appeared to be a trial period, a hiatus, and an eventual confirmation—already been with the paper for twenty years. Though his style of writing was something new to the actual sports column of the *Express*, the public *persona* was derivative. Hackett himself would doubtless gladly acknowledge how much he owed to the flamboyant, inventive Henry Rose, with whom he worked for many years in Manchester, and for whom he wrote an obituary sharply distinguished by its sincerity.

Rose, by origin a Cardiff Jew, had made use of a finely developed sense of showmanship to become the idol of Northern sports journalism. When he came into the Press Box at Liverpool, the fans on the famous Spion Kop terrace behind the goal would ritually boo him, and Rose, immaculate, with cigar, overcoat, and brown trilby hat, would raise the hat to them. Famous for his generosity to other journalists, immensely skilful in deploying his network of "contacts," he was a mine of exclusive news stories. He belongs, as Dr. Leavis remarked in another context, "to the history of publicity," rather than to any history of sports *writing*; the matter was always secondary to the manner. But in Desmond Hackett's brown bowler hat, his cultivation of the jaunty image, it is not unfair to discern an echo of Henry Rose. The difference between them is that Henry Rose failed when he was uprooted from the North and tried in London; Hackett, after a difficult beginning, survived.

It is generally accepted in Fleet Street that he made sure of his job with his report of the Hungary *versus* Brazil World Cup quarter final in Berne, in 1954. It was a match of alarming violence, in which fists, boots, and—afterwards—even bottles were used. Hackett's report, which appeared on the front page, began like this:

> The World Cup quarter final was a riot. My jacket is ripped, my shirt torn, and I am minus a tie. And I have been thrown over a fence. So I do mean a riot.... I tried to cross the field and ended up thrown over a fence by two policemen. Considering the riot going on around me I was grateful to be out of it.
>
> But I was able to help Mrs. Ellis, the wife of the Halifax referee, and her two young sons through a side entrance into her husband's dressing-room.

Bob Ferrier's version of the incident, in the *Daily Mirror*, was a little different. "Mr. Ellis' wife, Kathleen, pale and frightened, was 'rescued' from the packed stands where the fans were fighting by Scottish referee Charles Faultless."

FIFA, the International Football Association, appeared to be sceptical; they held an inquiry into the incident which established nothing concrete. The *Daily Express* were enormously pleased; they are said to have presented Hackett with a bonus—and a new suit.

Since then, Hackett's column has been an unswervingly loyal reflection of the post-war ethos of the *Express*. The event is always secondary to the personality—or the predicated personality—of the columnist, whether it be the Hungarian revolution ("I am besieged by Russian tanks") or a boxing match.

In 1958, Hackett went to the Swedish World Cup, and wrote this about an injured Russian footballer:

> Netto had his Kremlin-treasured left leg in an elastic support. He cut out the tougher leg tests and worked with one of the half-dozen trainers in this Russian soccer circus. Being a helpful kind of chap, I kicked a few stray balls in Netto's direction, and they were all carefully steered back to the trainer with a RIGHT foot.

The *Express* man works under relentless

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pressure. He must always be one jump ahead, one step farther "inside" than his competitors. He is, one feels, in some sense the embodiment of Wenlock Jakes, in Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop*, a man who can arrive in a Balkan town to cover a revolution and, when he finds there is none, produce one with the sheer, purple force of his prose. His competitors see him rather in the guise of Waugh's Sir Jocelyn Hitchcock, lurking secretly in his hotel room, spinning stories they can never hope to match.

Once more, the idiom is as far away as ever; the *Express*, in any case, has an idiom of its own.

J. L. MANNING, the columnist and former Sports Editor of the *Daily Mail*, has certainly bridged the gap between the classes in terms of his appeal, but he has done so through opinionation, rather than through language. One reads Manning because, at his best, he is genuinely controversial and well informed, because he expresses views which, however antipathetic they may seem at times, appear to be seriously held. The technique, the colour, and the occasional passion of sport are beyond his range. He is neither a natural reporter nor a vivid phrase-maker. He is essentially a political writer (it is no coincidence that he has stood for Parliament as a Conservative candidate). "More often than not," he has said, "I write about the reconstruction of sport" (a subject which similarly engrossed his father, the late L. V. Manning, the authoritative and much-quoted columnist of the *Daily Sketch*).

He can deploy facts with telling skill, has a sense of the development of sport over the years, and has ridden some good hobby horses: tighter control of professional boxing, for example, and a limitation of the subsidy to horse-racing, when less patrician sports cry out for money. He is most effective when the tension between self-absorption and involvement with his material is evenly maintained. When he is not seriously involved, the humour grows ponderous, the style coagulated, and there may be solecisms; a rough tour made by a Rugby team was once described as a *tour de force*. But if he is not a naturally humorous writer, his slightly archaic, heavy touch can sometimes work well:

> Does it not worry you, Manning, that the way things are going in sport, the next amateur to relinquish his status or retire will hire the Albert Hall . . . to sponsor it, and make so much money that it will be possible to afford amateurism after all?

IT IS ARGUABLE, I think, that certain writers have appeared who might have been capable of finding the idiom, building the bridge, were the popular Press not so cautious and hide-bound. Indeed, one of the most interesting appointments of the new *Sun* was that of Clement Freud, a gifted and sophisticated natural writer, as their first sports columnist.

The late H. D. Davies, who wrote for years on cricket and football for the *Guardian*, as Old International, was one who might have succeeded. Certainly his idiosyncratic football reports on the popular B.B.C. programme, *Sports Report*, were widely appreciated. The style might have been polished and mature; the voice, beguilingly, was as Lancashire as hotpot. After Davies had been killed in Manchester United's 1958 air crash at Munich—the team, and several reporters, were on their way home from a match in Yugoslavia—Neville Cardus wrote this of him:

> Old International was the first writer on soccer to rise above the immediate and quickly perishable levels of his theme and give us something to preserve in terms of character, vivid imagery, and language racy of Lancashire county. . . . Only a few weeks ago [he] told us of this sceptical man in the Maine Road crowd, and how he shouted, 'Look at 'im, tryin' to dribble. Why doesn't he learn? 'E's nothing else to do.

Davies, again, was a quality writer who emerged from the working classes, for his father was a cotton warehouseman who, as a boy, walked to Manchester from the Midlands with sixpence in his pocket, in search of work. He had a fine eye for character, eccentricity, and appearance, and a love of anecdote. Of Bill Foulke, the 22-stone goalkeeper who played for Sheffield United and England before the First World War, he wrote:

> The sight of Foulke's stomach in goal was said to have been the one thing which would persuade Bloomer [*a legendary goal scorer*] to abandon his golden rule when shooting—namely, never to let the ball rise above knee high. The story goes that in one match Bloomer twice knocked Foulke insensible with violent shots in the stomach, and sought to do it a third time. But this time Foulke incontinently fled and let the ball through.

But an idiom grows, it cannot be manufactured, and for a very long time to come, the gap between such writers as Arlott, Cardus, Alan Ross (on cricket), Geoffrey Green of the *Times* (on football), and the popular Press will remain a vast one. Before popular sports journalism can rid itself of its shoddy inexactitudes, its weary stylisation, another gap must disappear, that between the quality and the popular newspaper, and this, in turn, is largely dependent on social change.

Brian Glanville

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EAST & WEST

A Poet in Berlin

THE YOUNG MAN is called Rainer Kirsch. He speaks in a strong Saxon accent and he is reciting his poetry: fourteen bad poems, four middling ones, and a good one. The audience consists of West Berlin students in a hostel called *Siegmunds Hof*. Some years back I knew him rather well. Seven years ago we were fellow-students of philosophy in Jena. We were friends (or so I believed). We showed one another our literary efforts (which under the prevailing Party conditions there was no chance of getting published); we shared the same views on Ernst Bloch, Wolfgang Harich and Walter Ulbricht, on the need to "humanise" Socialism and to "liberalise" the dictatorship. Then one day they arrested one of us—and it was not Rainer Kirsch.

For "Prisoner 200" (as I was known from then onwards) unbelievable months began. Months spent in a tiny cell, months without a book but with plenty of hunger, and no contact with the outside world other than the "Interrogation Room"—"Why don't you admit that you're a criminal?"

And then one day: "Prisoner 200, your trial is on today. Comb your hair properly. You will be shaved afterwards. Come along with me!" The way from the security police prison to the court-room led through an opening in a brick wall. At the trial Rainer Kirsch (born in 1924), gave evidence. He testified that in private conversation with him I, the accused, had advocated a change in the economic structure of the DDR, a weakening of the State machine, and freedom for all ideologies. "He expressed solidarity with the executioners of the Hungarian counter-revolution and disapproved of the arrest of Harich. He has also slandered the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the DDR, Walter Ulbricht." The court retired to consider its verdict. The witness was told he could claim his expenses at the cashier's office. The verdict was in accordance with the public prosecutor's requirement: four years' jail for *Boykotthetze*, a criminal offence according to Article 6 of the Constitution of the DDR.

Prisoner 200 became "Convict Z." and remained so from 1957 to 1961. And now here he was in West Berlin: sitting, as "Dr. Z.," in the audience of three hundred students in *Siegmunds Hof*, with mounting excitement. Only a few feet away from him, facing him on the platform, was the poet Rainer Kirsch reading from his own works. The poet Rainer Kirsch did not recognise Dr. Z. but Dr. Z. recognised Rainer Kirsch; he, at least, had hardly changed at all in the intervening seven years, except that he was now a bit stouter, and no longer wore his hair long (*à la* Wolfgang Borchert) but short (*à la* Brecht), like most of these "young poets from the DDR." Beside him sat his wife, Sarah Kirsch, who is also a poet. She gaily recited some nursery rhymes.

THE AUDIENCE was friendly and interested. One seemed to sense a firm determination not to ask any "provocative" questions during the discussion period or allow any to be asked. But Dr. Z. had in fact come to the meeting precisely in order to ask a provocative question. He had not really come for literary criticism: he already knew most of the poems from newspapers and periodicals. He also knew something that no one else in the audience could know: Kirsch's poems of 1956 were his best poems—they were those which the "Interrogator" had read out to "Prisoner 200" to prove what a catastrophic influence the "Revisionist Z." had once had on the poet Kirsch. And Dr. Z. had now come to ask about these poems of 1956.

WHEN he heard that the poet Rainer Kirsch was lecturing in West Berlin he did not at first know what to do. Friends and acquaintances offered their advice. One, who had been sentenced to 25 years in 1948 for "social democratism," and had been released in 1964, said in a quiet voice: "Just go and give him a sock on the jaw." A sensitive Westerner disagreed: "Don't go to the lecture—it will only upset you. Report him to the police for aiding and abetting your arrest and imprisonment." And a lady pleaded: "Go to the meeting! We must not evade the past! But don't go to avenge yourself—go to forgive him. . . ."

And now here was Dr. Z., helplessly thinking over all these suggestions, and sitting among the Berlin students, listening to the poet Kirsch, in

THE GROTESQUE *incident which is here narrated happened recently in Berlin. Dr. Günter Zehm is one of Germany's leading young philosophers and critics. Since his release from an East German prison he has been living and working in the West. It was on a "literary assignment" for the editor of* Die Welt *in Hamburg that he turned up at an East-West poetry reading in West Berlin.*

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his Saxon brogue, declaiming his new poems, so nostalgic for Mayakovsky. Dr. Z. thought to himself: "If only he were a rogue! Haven't there been really great poets who were great rogues, rascals who richly deserved to hang? Isn't it only in sermons that art and morality are identical? ... But Kirsch is no more a great rogue than he is a great poet. It was not because he was wicked or sadistic that he handed me over to the Political Police—but merely to save his own skin. He might even have been arrested himself (if his father had not been such a big shot in the party). It could be that his own father and my Interrogator went to him to persuade him, in all friendliness, to ease his political conscience and confess the kind of conversations he had had with the Revisionist Z.... Was the poet Rainer Kirsch tearful when he decided to save the situation (and himself)? ... And when his statement was made public at the trial didn't he have to leave the university? ... But he was given the chance to prove himself in productive work—and how well he has proved himself...."

Somebody put a question relating to this matter, and he replied in an oddly humorous way. Yes, he said, as a student he had always been "up in the clouds." And then on the farms and in the cooperatives, he came down to earth. That was all past. Now, he was studying at the "Johannes R. Becher Literary Institute" in Leipzig. He intended to settle down as a free-lance writer.

It was at this point that Dr. Z. wanted to put his question. He wanted to ask whether everything had really gone as smoothly as all that—straight into productive work, straight out of it. Didn't some things get left behind: early poems, youthful friends? Did he remember a certain "Prisoner 200"? Just as Dr. Z. was about to ask the question someone in the crowded audience plucked his sleeve and whispered: "Excuse me, but aren't you the former 'Revisionist Z.'? My God, you really are in the right company! The literary editor of the Communist *Neues Deutschland* is sitting right in front of you." The flashbulbs just now all belonged to East German journalists and this man himself was a broadcaster from the (East German) *Deutschlandsender*....

Dr. Z. felt quite surrounded. Oh yes, he quite understood: "freedom of the press." The worthy officials of the *Siegmunds Hof* had reserved seats in the front row for all the worthy literary guests from the East. But could Dr. Z. now ask the poet Kirsch about "Prisoner 200"? If there was once a Prisoner 200 might there not be still room for a "Prisoner 201"?

Just a moment. Do you deny that things have improved over there? The criminal law is not administered as strictly as it was in your time. The infliction of punishment has become more humane. Just listen how impudently Kirsch is dealing with Mao Tse-tung! How blithely he is attacking dilatory economic officials who do more harm than good to the Cause! And how wonderful is the optimism evoked by Sarah Kirsch's nursery rhymes! These young people still have ideals. They are calm and reasonable, no longer as fanatical as Johannes R. Becher, but with their faces no less enthusiastically turned to the future! ...

No, this cannot be so. All this is a lie. This idyll that Kirsch and his new friends have concocted, this idyll of the "hard, clear, sober, clean working day of the Republic"—surely it is humbug. On the very day that the poet Rainer Kirsch was performing in West Berlin, this is what happened to an elderly woman living alone. Her 18-year-old son had secretly crossed to the West across the barbed-wire frontier, and she now lost her job as manageress in a textile factory in Thuringia; she was also turned out of her two-room flat and the housing authorities offered her no replacement or compensation; the woman is 54 and will therefore have to wait six years; then she will be a pensioner and be eligible to go West and visit her son. On the same day, somewhere in the Baltic, police seized a canoe in which a former political prisoner who had been assigned, after release, to a job in the province of Neubrandenburg, was trying to escape to Denmark. The commander of the police boat examined the refugee's papers, and remarked: "This will bring you at least another three years." On the same day Dr. Z. knew that he must never go to the Alexander-platz for a beer with the man from the *Deutschlandsender* who had opened a conversation with him. He knew that only a few hundred yards away, in a hut, an officer in a green uniform had a list of wanted persons, including the name of Dr. Z.: "*wanted for illegal crossing of the frontier.*"

Should poems take account of facts? But, then, poets who make a deliberate political commitment should not cover these facts with a smoke screen. How can there be political poets who tacitly accept or even approve of these facts just in order to make it possible for themselves (as they so often confess) to criticise "small, isolated" abuses? At this moment, one of these poets, Rainer Kirsch, once the friend of a certain "Revisionist Z." and who later gave evidence against a certain "Prisoner 200," was

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answering questions from the audience in a students' hostel. The literary editor of *Neues Deutschland* smiled up at him from the front row. In the second row, a certain Dr. Z., unsmiling, unrecognised. A shy young man in the audience: "Herr Kirsch, you said in one of your poems that the important thing is *genau zu hassen*, 'to hate precisely.' What do you mean by that? What are the objects of this precise hatred?" To which the poet replied: "The objects of my precise hatred are the people who are in favour of the prescription of Nazi crimes. I hate the society that is preparing for war. I hate the Western imperialists who are slaughtering innocent blacks in the Congo."

At this point Dr. Z., in the second row, again felt a violent desire to stand up and ask: "Herr Kirsch, when you secured four years imprisonment for 'Prisoner 200' before the provincial court in Gera, for incitement to boycott, what then was the object of your precise hatred? Was it the 'Prisoner 200' who, after all, had once been your friend, the Revisionist Z.? Or was it that captain of the security service who, assisted by your Comrade father, induced you, by threats, to give evidence and to forswear your own poems?" As he stood up he caught sight of the neck, just in front of him, of the literary editor of *Neues Deutschland*. He sat down again. After all, why pick on Kirsch?

He suddenly remembered a sentimental story. It was about an old Jew who was giving evidence in a war crimes trial. This man had gone through appalling experiences. But in court all he could remember was a comparatively unimportant episode that had occurred long before his concentration camp period. Some *S.A.* men had ransacked his apartment and pulled up a little orange tree which he kept in a flower pot. The old man was still able to name precisely the men who had destroyed the little tree, but he was not able to say with certainty whether it was this or that particular man who had ordered his wife to the gas chamber, before his very eyes. He came back, again and again, to the orange tree....

As Dr. Z. made his way out of the meeting, the applause for the poet Kirsch was still echoing within. "After all," he thought, "why pick on Kirsch? The East-West poetry readings are to continue. Next week Brigitte Reimann is coming and then, in January, Volker Braun. How do I know what orange trees they have pulled up? In Germany we have got so used to knowing that many of yesterday's murderers are still among us—we shall get used to seeing the criminals of to-day in our midst....

He left, feeling strangely moved. It wasn't to revenge, or to remorse. The friend who had advised him not to go to the *Siegmunds Hof* was probably right.

Günter Zehm

Last Instructions

As one would say, lighting an evening pipe
In the village street
"Tatties will soon be ripe
And sweet in the mouth this year,
Having been planted dry",
So Willag, before the boat turned over
Shouted to them on the shore
"Drive my kye and sheep from the oats
Into the wild white clover
And Breck can have my horse for his five goats."
Then his boots filled, and Willag said no more.

G. M. B.

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LETTERS

The Pollsters

I, TOO, HAVE been puzzled by the lack of agreement among the major British polls commented on by H. J. Eysenck in the February ENCOUNTER. These differences could, as the pollsters contend, be a result of chance factors. They estimate that normal sampling errors could produce a divergency of four per cent from the actual result in either direction. Hence if two polls erred in the opposite direction, this could result in an eight per cent disagreement. And given the fact that Gallup and the N.O.P. use different sampling methods, occasional sharp divergence should not be surprising.

What should be more surprising, perhaps, given the variation in methods, is that the two surveys, and others as well, produce fairly good "predictions" of the election results in their final polls. This occurs for at least two reasons. First, the number of undecided voters declines as election day nears. Consequently the problem presented by the undecided respondent declines greatly. Polling organisations treat the undecided in different ways; some attempt to force them to give some sort of opinion, or seek to predict how they will vote from other information about them, *e.g.* their past voting record or their opinions on various relevant issues; others ignore them in reporting opinion until the final pre-election poll. A second and more important reason for the decline of the "gap" among different pollsters is that some polling organisations improve their procedures as they get close to an election. The only circumstance in which the accuracy of a polling organisation's work may be tested by the general public or commercial clients is during an election. Consequently, to make accurate election predictions is extremely important for survey organisations as Henry Durant pointed out in his comment in the March ENCOUNTER. As a result, some of them increase the size of their sample, use diverse sampling procedures, and employ varied methods of questioning respondents; for example, they may use a secret ballot procedure as well as an open interview. (I am discussing American methods; I do not know the British situation well enough to say whether similar procedures are used there.) The differences between the polling procedures used immediately before elections and those employed at other times should, of course, be made manifest to the general public, politicians, and commercial clients. In interpreting poll results in non-election periods, readers often forget or do not know that these results are often obtained by more relaxed methods than those employed immediately before elections. Hence when a poll indicates a shift in party fortunes, or an unexpected distribution of responses concerning a given issue, this may be due to errors resulting from less reliable procedures, rather than indicating a real change in public opinion.

ONE SHOULD ALSO keep in mind that many opinion distributions reported by pollsters are highly unstable. When individuals are asked for their attitudes on various issues about which they have little information or interest, they tend to give a response which is subject to change when, or if, the issue becomes important to them personally, is widely discussed, or is advocated or opposed by a group with which they identify. Similarly, in the absence of a general election, individuals queried about the party they would vote for if an election were to be held now, may give an "irresponsible" answer. Disappointed supporters of a given party will often "shift" to another party in a poll, or even in a by-election as a means of expressing their discontent with some current policies of their party. Such an answer or vote is not intended to damage their party's chances of retaining or securing office. As a general election approaches, answers and prospective votes are more likely to reflect the respondent's "true" party identification or opinion. Every student of public opinion knows the common phenomenon of the regression back to traditional party allegiances among many who have defected between general elections. In both Britain and Germany during the 1950s and/or 60s, polls have reported a sizeable shift towards the left parties in the interval between elections, a shift which has often been large enough to give Labour and the Social-Democrats a majority in the poll results. However, as the election nears, habitual non-socialist voters who do not like their traditional party apparently have second thoughts about putting the socialists into office, and, often at the very last moment, return to voting Conservative or Christian Democratic, or for the third parties, Liberal or Free Democratic.

Given the looser party loyalties which characterise inter-election periods, it becomes understandable that different polls should produce varying results at such times. What these differences reflect is that public opinion is a volatile phenomenon. In the United States, pollsters have discovered to their sorrow that they cannot "predict" party primaries with any degree of reliability. Thus in 1964, the polls were off by eight percentage points or more in predicting the Republican primaries in some states. And what was even worse, they named the wrong man as the prospective winner. Louis Harris reported Rockefeller would triumph in New Hampshire, whereas Lodge won, while in Oregon he reported that Lodge would be ahead, and Rockefeller came in first. The problem of the American party primary elections is that they are conducted in the absence of fixed party labels differentiating candidates within the parties. Many voters therefore, remain terribly confused about the issues and candidates, readily changing from one to the other up to the last moment.

Like Angus Campbell (May ENCOUNTER), I, too, am not concerned about the "public image of social science" being disturbed by newspaper polls. In this respect, you are much better served in Britain than we are in the U.S. Your serious newspapers and broadcasting media much more regularly invite university authorities to interpret poll results and election trends than do comparable American outlets. We have no successful journal comparable

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Washington

THIS *is one of those dangerous periods of ferment in American taste. It is almost impossible to know what to think about anything any more.*

Take Norman Mailer. For years Mailer was one of the safest culture bets in the country. You could go anywhere and praise Mailer and be considered culturally sound. Mailer was in. He wrote for The Village Voice *and* Esquire *and got written about in the kind of magazines that are always describing "The Fundamental Dichotomy."*

Now Mailer is out. The tastemakers threw his body over the Kremlin wall last month when he published An American Dream, *a book not remarkably different from the other stuff he had written over the last 15 years when he was in. The tastemakers murdered him. It was like Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the 20th Party Congress. If his book had been merely bad, as they all insisted, it could have been quietly dismissed in a few of those crisply witty paragraphs with which the tastemakers like to garrotte failed authors. Instead, they exhausted thousands of words reviling it.*

But the tastemakers were not reviewing An American Dream. *They were reading Mailer out of the Supreme Soviet, stripping him of his epaulets and like Khrushchev exorcising Stalin's ghost, signalling the public to tear down his statues.*

Now Mailer is out, a victim of the power struggle. Actually, the concept of "in" and "out" is also out. NEW YORK TIMES

New York

MR. GROMYKO *told the General Assembly today that Soviet operators on the Washington-Moscow hot line were converting the American side to a study of Russian literature. Noting that there was a continual check on the operation of the line for prompt contact in case of an international crisis, he said the Soviet operators frequently transmit extracts from* Notes of a Sportsman, *" by Turgenev. He said the texts had aroused "great interest toward Russian classical literature on the part of the American operators. The Americans from time to time transmit the results of baseball games. Well, these are also forms of cultural exchange. The line has never been used for its direct purpose. Most probably nobody will object if such a situation prevails in the future.* NEW YORK TIMES

London

ATTITUDES *to Western Germany have coloured the opinions of Members of Parliament about the communiqué issued in Washington. A Labour member of the Left described the communiqué yesterday as "worse than I had feared," but this view was based on an incorrect transmission of the terms of the statement. One version of the statement contained the phrase "Our allies and France," and this was taken to mean that Mr. Wilson had tied himself up in a liaison with the U.S. and Western Germany, and was willing with them to let de Gaulle's France do its damnedest. The correct phrase in the communiqué was "Our allies and friends."*

THE GUARDIAN

London

DAME EDITH SITWELL, *the poetess, who died last December, aged 77, was buried in the wrong grave and on Home Office sanction the body was exhumed and reburied in the correct grave within a few days of the first interment. Her brother, Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell, discovered the mistake.* THE TIMES

Washington

WEBSTER *defines American as "any native or inhabitant of America; a citizen of the United States." But the editors of the Oxford English Dictionary see it in a slightly different light and Representative Bingham, Democrat of New York, isn't happy about it.*

One of the definitions given for the noun "American" in both the Oxford English Dictionary and the Concise Oxford Dictionary, Mr. Bingham said today, reads "A native of America of European descent."

"This definition, which may have been appropriate in the 18th century, is certainly inaccurate today," Mr. Bingham said. This is a virtual insult to millions of American citizens of African, American Indian, Asian, Latin American, Polynesian, and other origins. NEW YORK TIMES

Mogadishu

FAMOUS *as story-tellers, the Somalis have now added a modern fable to their anthologies. It concerns the five cranes in Mogadishu harbour. The pride of them all was a small British crane acknowledged by everybody to "work like a watch" and lovingly cosseted by its driver. One December day, an overseer ordered the crane to perform deeds beyond its reach. Its driver protested, warning of tragedy. The overseer insisted, the driver bowed his head, the crane stretched its neck and fell into the harbour. Enter then a Russian technician offering as a symbol of friendship between socialist republics a monstrous and hitherto despised Russian crane. It lumbered forward and, with little effort, pulled the British crane on to dry land. The Somali crowd on the harbour wall applauded, shouting, "The Russian crane has eaten up the British crane." The supremacy of the harbour has not been in dispute since then.*

THE ECONOMIST

Chester

IN *an address at a Western Command luncheon given to newspaper editors and executives of the B.B.C. and Independent television companies, Major-General G. W. R. Monckton said he was offering a bottle of champagne to the first writer of a play portraying the sexual life of a soldier as normal.* THE TIMES

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to *New Society* in its effort to bring serious non-professional discussions of social science research and poll results to the attention of the educated policy-settlers of the country. It is a curious fact that although systematic empirical work in sociology, politics, and social psychology in Britain has involved relatively few scholars until very recently, your policy-makers and intellectual élite have paid more attention to those few who have worked in these fields, while American researchers have had less influence. I suspect these differences reflect the more integrated and centralised structure of the British parties.

MAY I CONCLUDE with one comment in defence of British pollsters? My experience with Henry Durant and Mark Abrams, the only ones I have dealt with, is that they are extremely generous in making their data available to academic scholars for so called "secondary analysis," that is, the re-analysis of survey materials for scholarly purposes. Such secondary analysis can and does deal with many of the problems in which Dr. Eysenck is interested, *e.g.*, the nature of the Tory worker, the characteristics of non-voters, floating voters, and similar questions. I do not think one can expect commercial research organisations to devote their energies to studying such questions in depth. These are tasks which political sociologists, political scientists, and social psychologists at the universities should deal with. The reasons Britain is behind the U.S. in such research are not because its pollsters are more backward, but because it lacks a large body of academic scholars concerned with such tasks. Much of the American research which Dr. Eysenck advocates for Britain has been done not by the pollsters but by academics like Herbert Hyman, Paul Lazarsfeld, Peter Rossi, the late Samuel Stouffer, and many others. British scholars interested in comparable problems will find that British pollsters are eager to have further work done with the data they collect, particularly since it can help them improve their work.

SEYMOUR MARTIN LIPSET

University of California, Berkeley

Herr Bach at Northwestern

I AM HAPPY to be able to tell Professor Lionel Trilling that the Northwestern University Committee, whose discouraging search for a creative figure to function in the University he described in "A Valedictory" [March], had its success after all.[1]

It seems that one of the Committee members had the happy idea of approaching the Cantor of the Thomas-Kirche at Leipzig, Johann Sebastian Bach. Herr Bach, it seems, was looking for a new job anyhow—in fact he had written to his old friend Erdmann for one—so he listened to the Committee's proposition, put forth with a certain hesitancy, partly because of Bach's reputation for irascibility, partly because of Beethoven's reaction. When they explained he would be expected to write a few pieces every year for University occasions—graduation, convocations—Herr Bach shrugged. After all, at the Thomas-Kirche he had to turn out a cantata almost every *week*. Master classes in the keyboard instruments?—no problem, since he was doing that in any event. Concerts? He loved to play. Conducting the glee club, and preparing their annual tour? Herr Bach hesitated, since he was having great difficulty maintaining discipline in the Thomas-Schule chorus. But the Committee, gaining confidence, pointed out that students were in the Northwestern Glee Club because they *wanted* to be in it; that it was considerably larger than the forces Herr Bach had at his disposal, and about which he had often complained; and probably better. They pointed out that he would have his summers free to travel, and Herr Bach loved to travel. The fit clearly was there, the Committee and Herr Bach agreed, it was only a matter, they explained to him, of getting the Trustees to approve.

The Committee was a little worried over the Trustees reaction—moving a family as large as Herr Bach's, with his five harpsichords (which he refused to part with) all the way from Germany *was* quite an expense. The Trustees, happily, were accommodating—after all they had that money they were going to give Philip Johnson for the café, which covered the moving expenses and left enough over to tune up the Schnittger organ in the University Chapel. The offer went off, Herr Bach accepted, gave the Leipzig town council two weeks notice (he had had several run-ins with them, and he never forgot that he wasn't their first choice for the Cantor's job), and moved family and harpsichords to Evanston, where he's lived happily ever after. The boys are in good schools, something he always wanted for them; Anna Magdalena, a charming lady and accomplished musician herself, is director of music at a nearby girls' school; and the Bach home is the focal point for Chicago Symphony musicians and American Conservatory students. Mr. Bach conducts the Bach-Mozart concerts at Tanglewood every summer, and has just recorded his tenth "Bach Plays Bach" album for RCA Victor.

None of the other universities has tried to pirate Mr. Bach, because they have their own composers, albeit none with quite the reputation of Mr. Bach. For a while Yale had let it be known they were looking for somebody to replace Paul Hindemith, which made the Northwestern people pretty nervous. But when Franz Joseph Haydn heard what a great thing Bach had going for him at Northwestern, he didn't even wait to be approached by Yale before he quit Count Esterhazy.

In fact so many painters, sculptors, and musicians are eager to get their damned patrons off their backs that the problem now is lining up enough university jobs for them. Since Professor Trilling gave his valedictory, the Northwestern Committee has been made a permanent body, under the National Academy, to do nothing but find universities for the creators. The only creators they *don't* have to concern themselves with are the young American poets and novelists. They're all at universities already.

JEROME S. SHIPMAN

Houston, Texas

[1] Lionel Trilling's "Valedictory" was delivered at Northwestern University and first published in the local *Tri-Quarterly*.

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Nkosi's Judges

"One would rather see judges defrocked for upholding justice than prevented from assuming such duties on the grounds of race and colour."

Casually glancing through February's Encounter my eyes came to rest on that phrase. It appeared as part of a letter by Lewis Nkosi. I am sure that all those who think of a judge primarily as a man occupying a highly paid, much respected and therefore most desirable position will agree with Mr. Nkosi. The good things in life ought to be fairly shared out.

On the other hand, if that's all that judges are for, we might as well do without them and save the money. Any Police Sergeant knows enough law to keep order and do the bidding of the Executive. It is sad that a man of Mr. Nkosi's standing in the African community should show so little sympathy for the function of the judiciary. I am sure he would not have written a similar phrase about a profession whose work he thought important.

"One would rather see doctors debarred for using modern drugs and anaesthetic methods than prevented from assuming such duties on the grounds of race and colour."

Perhaps I am wrong. Perhaps Mr. Nkosi is looking forward to being treated by acupuncture in Accra.

Rudolf Fischer

London

Arguing with Kingsley Martin

Mr. Kingsley Martin (Encounter, June) continues to confuse facts and fiction. But all his explanations cannot alter the historical record of the *New Statesman* and, retroactively, make his editorial policy anti-Stalinist and "Churchillian." It is really quite hopeless to attempt such a rewriting of history; the old volumes of the *New Statesman* are still available.

It is only a rationalisation to imply that its attitude towards Stalin was simply a question of drawing Russia into an alliance against the Nazis. Its sympathies were manifested only too obviously both before and after Hitler. For example, on July 4, 1931, the *New Statesman* argued that "the whole attitude of Soviet Government towards the West has changed since the exile of Trotsky and the adoption of the Five Year Plan." That was *before* Hitler: and long after him—a fortnight before Stalin's death, when the "doctors' trial" was being prepared (as an overture for a new bloodbath)—the *New Statesman* (February 21, 1953) assured its readers that "there is little doubt that American Intelligence was using Jewish organisations in Eastern Europe for its own ends in a fairly big way...." During the two decades between these two dates Mr. Martin's *New Statesman* was systematically throwing doubt on the authenticity of Stalin's crimes. The annihilation of millions of "kulaks," the Great Purge, the false confessions at the Moscow trials, the forced labour camps, the deportations of nationalities, the Katyn affair—all these and other crimes were never straightforwardly condemned by the *New Statesman*; their clear recognition was as a rule obfuscated in its columns. After 1956, when some of them were officially admitted in the Soviet Union, Mr. Kingsley Martin did not perform, as he should have done, an editorial *mea culpa*. On the contrary, he continued to strike an attitude of moral superiority towards those who recognised these crimes for what they were *before* the official admissions. Now, in 1965 he presents himself as a critic of Stalin—since 1937. If he believes that, he can still (as he did in the past) believe anything.

How good is the editorial record on resistance to Hitler before (and at the outset of) the 1939 war? Is it only a matter of "selective quotations" or of a single "lapse from grace"? First they oppose British rearmament and then they argue that Britain was too weak to do anything! Whatever the rights and wrongs of his opposition to the war "such as Mr. Chamberlain might muddle us into," Mr. Martin's support of appeasement both before Munich and after the conquest of Poland, and his condoning of the Soviet-Nazi Pact, gives him no right to refer to himself at the time as a "Churchillian." And how does the fact (which he cites to justify himself) that *so many others* in those dismal years (but not Churchill) favoured appeasement, make him a "Churchillian"? What a surprising justification for an editor who recently wrote in *Punch* (March 31, 1965) that the one tradition he is "prepared to assert as peculiarly British and uniquely splendid... is the tradition of non-conformity"! How can he, a non-conformist, invoke "the climate of British opinion in the 'thirties... (which) was for peace... at almost any price" as an extenuating circumstance for his numerous lapses from grace? The simple truth is that he was neither a critic of Stalin, nor a Churchillian at the time. He was not fighting the wrong climate of opinion—he was contributing to it. Against such obfuscation the gods themselves struggled in vain.

Leopold Labedz

London

Peter & the Wolf

I really must protest against the disgraceful article by Peter Ustinov [May]. If you are so indifferent to music why don't you leave it alone altogether, instead of allowing it to be mocked in this moronic, embarrassing manner?

Most of your readers must be unacquainted with the vast riches to be found in the music of such modern composers at Janaček, Schoenberg, Bartók and Webern, and Mr. Ustinov's shameful article can hardly have encouraged them to try to discover something of the great beauty of modern music.

You, Sirs, as rather elderly writers, probably derived a certain sniggering amusement from Mr. Ustinov's "Modern Musicians," but I, as a young person who has always derived great satisfaction from modern music, am shocked and amazed that you should have allowed such a cretinous, philistine article to appear in your magazine.

Michael Cummings

London

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AUTHORS

Sir Isaiah Berlin is a Fellow of All Souls and Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory at Oxford. His works include *Karl Marx* (1939), *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (1953), *The Inevitability of History* (1954), and his inaugural lecture (1959), *Two Concepts of Liberty*. He has been a frequent contributor to ENCOUNTER and among his articles are "A Marvellous Decade" (June, November, December 1955, and May 1956), "Russian Populism" (July 1960), and "Tolstoy and Enlightenment" (February 1961).

His present essay was originally a lecture at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. It will be included in *Aspects of the Eighteenth Century* (edited by Earl R. Wasserman), shortly to be published by the Johns Hopkins Press....

Lionel Trilling's essay is based on the Henry Sidgwick Memorial Lecture given at Newnham College, Cambridge, this year. Among his best-known books are *The Liberal Imagination*, *The Middle of the Journey*, and a biography of Matthew Arnold. During the past year he has been George Eastman Visiting Professor at Oxford....

Thom Gunn, who was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, is Assistant Professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley. He has published *Fighting Terms* (Fantasy Press, 1954), *The Sense of Movement* (Faber & Faber, 1957), and *My Sad Captains* (Faber & Faber, 1961)....

Norman Macrae is Deputy Editor of *The Economist*....

Isaac Bashevis Singer, the well-known Yiddish writer, lives in America. His works include *Gimpel the Fool*, *The Magician of Lublin*, *The Spinoza of Market Street*. His most recent book, *The Slave* (1963), was published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York, and Secker & Warburg, London....

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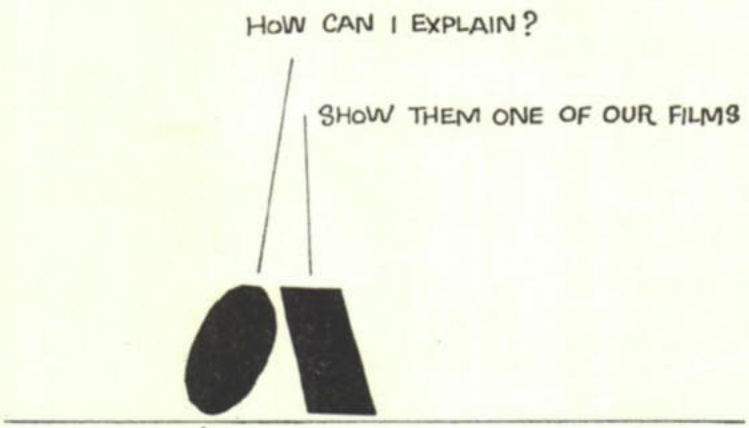

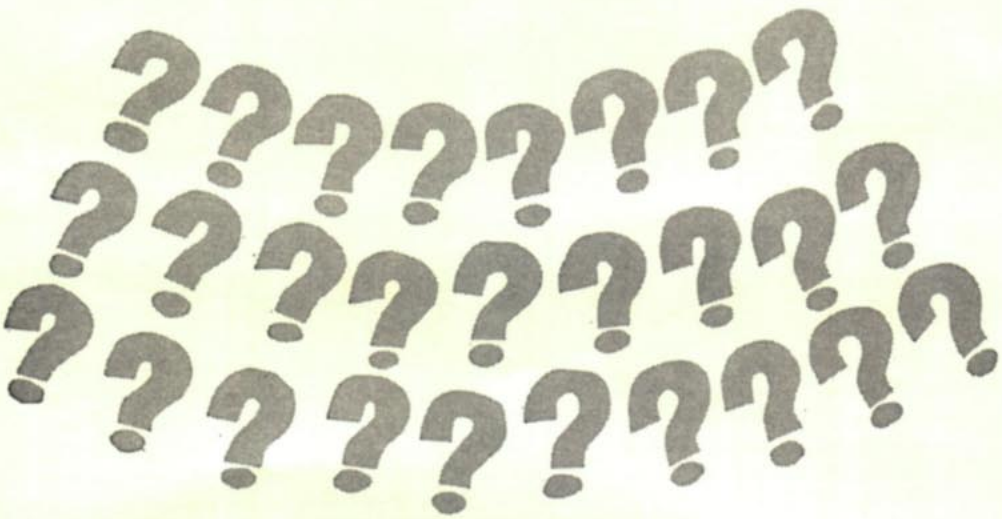

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